

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (2020)

Holy Spirit, Light Divine: Shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day;  
Let me see my Savior's face; let me all His beauties trace;  
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee.  
Amen.

**Matthew 21:23–27** When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. *The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?*” *And they discussed it among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.’* So they answered Jesus, *“We do not know.”* And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

In the Name of Jesus.

What a GIFT! It is NO MAN’S...OBLIGATION...to break through a brick wall with his head; or with the water of John’s baptism, or our Lord’s! Praise God! Hallelujah! The Spirit gets to be the Spirit: that’s HIS gift. We’ve got our own, my dear ones. We’ve been given more than ENOUGH on our plate!

The Gospel According to Saint Matthew proclaims that Jesus, son of Mary, claims all authority in heaven and on earth... Actually, He boasts that all authority in heaven and on earth has been ‘GIVEN’ to Him! YESSSSsssss.....

God The Holy Spirit teaches us that things are going to start RINGING with the Gospel when we hear about Christ and His Church and His men all ‘GIVEN TO...’!

Your poor pastor has been given all authority in heaven and

on earth. And I pardon you all your intentional bratty-ness; and I, this day, have cancelled any lasting penalty due from you, for all your unintentional outbreaks of weakness.

So, fear no man: not one who dresses funny like me; not even the man inside. All men—outside us, inside of us—all men are at heart like the interrogators of Jesus in the temple that day: SCARED STUPID! We are—no exceptions!—we are ALL prone to a sleepless, agitated concern for SELF! This explains most of life's slip-up self-centeredness AND our smug craftiness. 'HOW...DO...I...PRESENT...MEEEEEE....AND...have some sway?!'

Fear NOT, my dear disciples! You have ME! Samuel Paul's grandpa, pastor Paul! I incised on you—first thing today!—the cross impressed on you the day you were washed by a man given all the authority of heaven and earth (an hell t'boot!)—a man nearly as weak and sinful as me!

Look: Jesus has been GIVEN that authority too, MY authority. But don't you worry about the Man you cannot see. Just you pay attention to the man who fills your eyeballs here; and now, the ears Someone Else gave you to HEAR. To hear ME! The gift given THIS MAN is to command all things that all men are crazy to satisfy—god, men, our master below—ALL SHALL NOW suffer MY WORD as the LAST WORD...on you.

I declare—THIS MAN, Pastor fatty!—I confirm that you are spotless in the eyes of—well, anyone that matters! God...and anybody else.

I guarantee that your Maker smiles on you, daily and much.

I pledge heaven and earth as your inheritance, your gift, your oyster.

The next man's grudge against you: I take that burden away, right here and right now. And you can't have it back. No!

What YOU hold inside as unforgivable: give it up;  
 BECAUSE I say otherwise ABOUT...Y...O...U....!  
 WHATEVER you FEAR—‘AUTHORITY’...ONLY...CARES  
 what I SAY about your insides. And I say they’re disease-free; not  
 even death can hold you. NO ONE in heaven or on earth—no one  
 that MATTERS!—gives a HOOT about YOUR final estimation of  
 YOU!

What the Great Unseen—that EVERYBODY tries to  
 impress, but He cannot be impressed!—what is even HIDDEN and  
 wrong about your past or present frailty that NO MAN sees, but  
 HE does...

Well, you don’t gotta worry about THAT anymore! For  
 today I give you to eat the Body of the One that Heaven gave MY  
 GIFTS to: the crucified One; the Buried One; the One they lied  
 about and said His Body was stolen; the One they worshiped in  
 Galilee, where He had sent them. (Galilee, by the way, is another  
 name for Louisiana: people who call on Our Father in heaven, and  
 who are also good, hard-boiled sinners!)

The last word I say over you as we hum our way out the door  
 and into the playground of heaven and earth is: Peace. The Lord  
 GIVE you peace.

And....B...E...C...A...U...S...E....because I say—this man  
 right here!—because all authority in heaven and earth has been  
 given to ME!, as your poor, miserable sinning shepherd—because I  
 say ‘The Lord give you peace’...

Well, guess what?! The LORD gives you PEACE!

Why else would I say that to you?

‘By what authority, Jesus, do you act as King of Israel, Son  
 of Man and Son of God?’

Jesus' answer? 'The same as that now headless man, John.'

There are other men just like you, my dear ones! SO hungry, so thirsty, so ready to receive a message from ALL they are afraid of, all they try to bargain with—that they'll even take THE word of FINAL ASSURANCE...when it comes from the sad package that is me.

Oh! Lord ha' mercy!

There are also some in this world, the text tells us-- frightened, smug, disgusting, hardened, religious, INFLUENTIAL, IN CHARGE...yuch

Men who—for the moment—men who cannot accept that the crazy man in the wilderness has their number; or that the Man they can mock while He dies is the final word on ANYTHING.

While the Lord gives us this earth in which to toddle, my dear ones: there's no need to upset ANY...ONE... ON the playground. No man is too lowly for you to reach down. No man higher than we can stretch and reach. Whether or not anyone takes the LAW to heart, takes joy at The Gospel and the Sacrament, or takes assurance from the likes of you and me...WELL THAT AIN'T UP TO YOU AND ME now, is it?!

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! The Spirit GIVEN each of us—your poor pastor too!—HE will do all THAT!

What HAS...BEEN...GIVEN....US...is:

...to repent and be baptized; to say AMEN to the word of absolution; to eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood; to be little; to turn; to learn all over again every day everything about God in heaven and what He's still doing on earth, until the Happy End of THIS playtime, when our Father calls us on home; YOUR Home in the Name of Jesus.