

The Eighth 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 13:44–52

[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

In the Name of Jesus.

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

Even us and even here, dear disciples of Jesus! We are peoples too! Good fish, bad fish—I could only put so much time into trying to come up with a ‘red fish, blue fish’ rhyme for my darling.

But the Holy Spirit has given us every reason to tell the Lord Jesus and the Father Who sent Him that WE are very-well-gifted indeed! What has He left out, that He has not given us?!

A simple ‘Nai!’, ‘Yes!’ from the disciples: one word; and the Lord is satisfied that THEY understand HIS stories and their oomph?! CLEARLY, HE is at peace with the whole arrangement: His apostles, His Holy Ministry for the sake of His Church.

Oh, give THANKS to the Lord, dear Church! For I hope I am NOT the only person in the room who heard the pearl of great price and the treasure hidden in the field and admitted inside, ‘No! I do NOT understand ALL these things!’

What DID the apostles ‘understand’? Enough—thank You, Jesus!—to write down for us the Gospel According to Saint Matthew.

³¹ Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’” ³² But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” ³³ Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same.

The apostles SAY a lot of things!

And they DO some memorable things too!

³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch^[d] with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant^[g] of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place.

‘Yes! Weee understand!’ And the good Lord is satisfied. Satisfied that NOTHING is going to change on OUR part, from US, to HIM! So, He is fulfilling the Scripture by not changing a thing on HIS part, from Him, to the peoples, to the nations.

¹³ Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴ but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.

The disciples rebuked the people—for????? This is AFTER they give a ‘Nai! Yes!’ to the Teacher: ‘We gotcha Jesus! Star students!’

T...H...E...N...they say to parents, ‘What is WRONG with you! Have you no sense?! Bothering This Important, Influential Churchman—DISTRACTING HIM from MINISTRY?!!!!’

They were so wrong and so rude to those people, for what? For bringing children to Jesus, that He would lay his hands on them and pray with them, pray for them.

If the disciples rebuke people for THAT—they don’t understand’ NOTHING’!

And I’m not alone. None of us are. Give thanks to the Lord, Oh, peoples!

This is what ‘things old’ and ‘things new’ must be about. Old is Moses and Law and us to God and ugh. NEW is what lasts, WHO lasts!

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard^[i] of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

As if ANY of those things can keep Christ of the peoples away from Galilee! Tomb, soldiers---my dear ones: they’re keeping watch over a DEAD MAN! Just realized how funny that is. They wuz really afraid that Peter and the boys wuz gonna turn on a dime and take away DEAD the Man they all ran from while HE WAS ALIVE and walking on water and son on!

‘Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! Christ has burst the gates of hell. Death in vain forbids Him rise! Christ has opened Paradise!’

It’s all about when to despair and when not to despair. When do we give up, fellow disciples, and when is our confidence well founded?

DESPAIR OF YOU; never despair of HIM!

By DESPAIR, giving up HOPE, I am NOT counseling you to give up TYRING to be decent! The world needs SOME decent folk! Why not us? We could TRYYYYY.

What I mean is what I've been counseling you the last year of so: to make sure to pencil in, at least, a few minutes to sin this week, be bad, rebel against God. Bear with the only way I know how to talk, dear children of God!

When I tell you to make sure you sin this week I am urging you to rise with confidence NOWHERE but in the washing you have received at the Word of Jesus! NOT in any NEW 'YOU AIMED UP, YOU OOMPHING YOURSELF TO GOD, YOU STANDING OUT FROM OTHER PEOPLES!' No. Yuck!

He sends rain upon the good and the evil. The dragnet catches fish good and bad. Nothin's easier than baptizing a dirty scoundrel; ESPECIALLY by the authority of that dead Jesus! Don't forget! The guards tell us that Peter and Co. DID have an overnight conversion, slipped past the stone, the watch, the seal, and are keeping Jesus' body in Peter's attic for some reason. I know there's a rumor that the guards were bribed; but who ever hear of politicians and religious people lying and bribing and saying whatever they come up with at the moment?

So: try, friends! Since you're baptized—and HE is not going to change Who HE is, or expect ANYTHING outstanding from His Church. But rather, His Church, says Mister Church—the Lord—is where HE is what WE ain't and WE admit what we really are: just like everybody else....

Do good! And....sin!

Make today's agenda the 'to-do list' of Heaven, rather than your own appetites.

And approach the next man—NOT with the ammo you have been loading—'Well, here is MY OPINION, and MY loosely camouflaged complaint about the world, about events...about YOU!'

Instead, try! Try because Heaven and Earth has NO authority to call you dirty or clean! Only HE does. The One Whose Hands are fit for children; Whose prayer fits only them.

Approach the next man—you can start trying right here, with your fellow disciples, fellow children of God—

Approach ONE ANOTHER—with the needs and hurts and despair of ONE ANOTHER, rather than your own!

And if you are at ALL like your poor pastor; or Peter; or all peoples, you will have no END of reasons to give thanks to the Lord for HIS deeds!

By the Spirit Who lives in us, we will do some good. The good tree MUST bear good fruit. The Bible tells me so!

And the Bible also tells me and you, that the little scraps of good you and I begin to do are catnip for the bad little kittens we were all born to be. ‘Well, look what I HAVE done...compared to....’

This is what I mean by making sure you turn offensively sinful this week. I mean: do good! Others will see behind; sometimes we will see behind the good too.

And the Lord says: do not despair! Of ME!

He also says: “Take, eat; this is my body.”²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the^[c] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

That is what the kingdom of heaven is like!

Jesus has made a vow, that His Kingdom, His Father's kingdom is ours! And until His Church comes to That Day, He is 'ALL IN' for the children, for the treasure, for the pearl; even, for Peter. 'Don't despair! You will deny me! But then, go to Galilee, where I've have told you again and again I...WILL...BE!'

⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

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¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

The the Church is—we are—living proof of His deeds among the peoples in the Name of Jesus.