

REPENTANT REJOICING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Hear the Word of God for this Sunday, titled long ago, “Laetare – Rejoice,” as the Church once again breaks her fast during the 40-day countdown to the Resurrection of our Lord:

Swore YHWH to David (an) oath:

He will not turn back from it;

“Of (the) fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.”¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Those who have been regularly receiving God’s gifts here this Lent have noticed a color shift in the Chancel. The rose of rejoicing breaks through the purple of mourning to remind the God’s people that we may have joy in a season of repentance.

That repentance is ours to rejoice in because we have been given Jesus. He is the One promised in the Psalm. The Christ is the One in Whom God has compassion for us as we heard in the Old Testament reading. He is our comfort of God’s people. In Jesus we who believe in and through Him are declared to be sons of the free woman in the Epistle. He is the Living Bread from heaven, Who gives Himself to us now for forgiveness and eternal life.

All of those realities were proclaimed in the Psalm of the week. As part of the Great Hallel (Psalms 120-136), the words we spoke responsively today give us divine cause for joy in this season of repentance. Hear afresh how they began:

Arise, O YHWH, to Your resting place;

You and (the) Ark of Your might.²

When those words were chanted long ago, the First Temple of the Lord was being dedicated to the Lord. King Solomon, David’s son, prayed today’s words. Then, even before he finished praying the Psalm we have for today, the Lord’s bright, shining, glorious Presence came down from heaven. In a rush of cleansing fire, the sacrifices and burnt offerings were consumed. God’s glory filled the consecrated Temple, and the

¹ *Psalm 132:11.*

² *Psalm 132:8.*

priests could not enter.³

Well, that is a nice bit of Church History. But, what can we say of the Presence of the Lord today. First, we declare that God's presence in Christ fills the whole creation, sustaining and preserving it for the benefit of those who are, or will be, named with His Name. Second, we proclaim that God's special Presence began with us as we spoke His Name in the Invocation. Third, as the Psalm for the day was recited, we understood, in the movement of the Pastor into the Chancel to the Sanctuary, that God is with us, at His Table, in His gifts.

Now, we hear God's Presence, through the voice of a man, a sinner who has been forgiven, as He calls us fellow sinners. He does so that we might again behold our need for our Savior, that God might grant us His blood-bought forgiveness. Soon, God will come to us who have been washed in the blood of Jesus and grant us His righteousness. Our Psalm continues:

*Your priests, let them be clothed in righteousness;
and Your saints, let them shout for joy.⁴*

Today, the Church in this place rejoices that we have one of God's priests celebrating her entrance into her 91st year of life in this fallen world. We rejoice that God has washed her with the water and Word of Holy Baptism, even as He has washed those recently Baptized in this place. While we haven't dressed Annie again in a white robe this day, we can recall as we give thanks to God for preserving her in this Body and Life. We are also free to rejoice, even shout for joy, that we too have been given the white robes of the saints, even while we from time-to-time, really daily, fall and soil those garments. That is why we say today that we have joy in the midst of repentance, the theme of this day. Such is reflected in the next line of the Psalm:

For (the) sake of David, Your servant, do not turn the Face of Your Messiah.⁵

³ *II Chronicles* 6:40-7:3.

⁴ *Psalms* 132:9.

⁵ *Psalms* 132:10.

There, the plea of the faithful goes all the way back to the Promise God gave to King David. For us, about 3,000 years have elapsed since God spoke those words. Of course, David thought Solomon would be the fulfillment of the Lord's Promise. But, as a human he failed, was led astray to the false gods of and in this world by his pagan wives and concubines. At the end of his life, the question as to whether he, like his father David even entered into the Lord's rest seems open.

That serves as a warning to those who hear God's Promise. It is especially to be clear to those whom God has granted long life, or much material wealth, or great glory in the Church. We need to remember that God had chosen, before the foundation of the world, Who His Messiah, the Anointed One would be. In His time, God would reveal Him. He would be true man, that is sure. But, He was to be man without sin.

That certainly does not describe King Solomon, or any of his fully human and non-divine descendants. All of them, to greater or lesser extents, failed to be perfect, sinned often and fell from God's grace. Many died in unrepentance. Others fell asleep in the Lord having received His forgiveness in the Promise of the Messiah. It is they, like you, who prayed continually that God would not turn away the Face of His Christ from them. Hear again our hope which comes from God's Promise:

*Swore YHWH to David (an) oath:
He will not turn back from it;
"of (the) fruit of your body I will set upon your throne."⁶*

We, dear ones in Christ, know that prophecy is declared fulfilled in Christ Jesus. In Acts, St. Peter quotes the words of our Psalm in direct relation to Jesus. As we hold to the Apostolic Faith, we confess the same. As the spiritual descendants of the first disciples of our Lord after His death and resurrection, we cling to the revelation of Jesus as the Son of David from the genealogies in the Gospels with which the Nativity Season long past brought to mind. The Psalm goes on to declare why no one but Jesus could be seen to have fulfilled the prophecy:

⁶ Psalm 132:11.

“If they keep, your sons, My Covenant and My Testimonies which I will teach them, also their sons forever and ever shall sit upon your throne.”⁷

The Scriptures record generations of David’s descendants who failed to keep those words of God. That is why it took God’s intervention in the line of David, even as He preserved that genealogy, to make His Promise complete. This He did, as has been proclaimed, in Jesus. That is so important to us, for it is not by human work that God’s Word is fulfilled, but by His very Word. The Word completes itself. Hear again the Promise that God held forth, which the faithful had to cling to for 1,000 years after the Advent of the Christ, the Promise which has been handed down to us as complete for more than 2,000 years:

*For, has chosen, YHWH, in Zion;
He desired (it) for (a) habitation for Him.⁸*

From that, all the choices were God’s. He chose Zion, he chose the Holy city. He chose His people. He chose you. He washed you. He gave you the ability in Christ to discern right from wrong and to reject the evil that your old nature wills to do each day. God makes the choices and He gives those choices to us that we might be free and raised up in our baptismal garments. God goes on to speak of what he is doing in His people, in His time, in His way, from Mount Zion. He says:

*“This is My resting place forever;
here will I dwell for I desired it.”⁹*

When He spoke those words the people of Israel was united under one king – no northern kingdom, southern kingdom – although the seeds for that split were already sown. The Lord’s Word had gone forth. The Lord had given his promises and He had declared that in Zion His resting place would be forever. And what that means is

⁷ Psalm 132:12.

⁸ Psalm 132:13.

⁹ Psalm 132:14.

that it would be among His people, not actually in that temple which we know was destroyed and rebuilt and destroyed again but rather in the temple that He named for Himself – His holy people called by His Word. It is to those people that His faithfulness is shown. You see, among God’s people we still find unfaithfulness, and yet, our unfaithfulness does not annul the faith of God. His Word still stands clear. This He shows to each of us every day. As we pray forth the Words of the Our Father and ask that God would give us our daily bread, He provides us all that we need for this body and life, even if we do not recognize it. Thus He fulfills our petitions and He has fulfilled them in Christ. He goes on to say the promises that are fulfilled for us in Christ:

*Her provisions I bless, I bless;
her poor I will cause to satisfy (with) bread.¹⁰*

*And her priests I will cause to clothe with salvation;
and her saints for joy will shout!¹¹*

This particular day, a fifth Sunday, we have declared in bold confession, the words of the Athanasian Creed using a new format handed out by our Synod but in there declared exactly who this God is--three persons, one God, not confusing or mingling the substance and declaring the Christ who came as the son of David who in our flesh died in our sins and rose again, having freed us from them. Who then gave us from the water and the Word, His own righteousness that is His own ability to stand before the Father. This we know is ours because we have been washed with the water and the word. He goes on to say:

*There I will cause to sprout (a) horn for David;
I have prepared (a) lamp for My Messiah.¹²*

In those words He is foreshadowing the words declared in the beginning of Luke as, Zechariah beholding his son, declares that he would be the light to go before

¹⁰ Psalm 132:15.

¹¹ Psalm 132:16.

¹² Psalm 132:17.

Lord to declare the coming of the Messiah. To us we pick up the Bible and everything is in there. Remember, when those words were declared the rest of the story had not yet been written, except in the mind of God. Those words were spoken by a man who had been silent because of his misbelief, whose mouth was then opened to declare what his son would be – that is the forerunner, the light that would show the light who had come into the world. That light you know was Jesus. He goes on to say:

*His enemies I will cause to clothe in shame;
but upon Him will shine His crown.¹³*

In this season of Lent, as we reflect on the things that God did for us, we are free to reflect on the crown that Jesus wore, a crown of thorns driven into his flesh in a sense of mockery, even as he was clothed with the purple of royalty. Those things that we deserve for our sinfulness, he bore for us. When stripped of them, yet left with that crown, when nailed to the cross, the Christ showed that He was fulfillment of the words that we have declared today. In that you can take comfort and rest, even if God makes you live 91 years in this life.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Lent IV *Laetare* (LSB One-year series)
Psalm 132:8-18; Isaiah 49:8-13; Galatians 4:21-31; John 6:1-15

March 30, 2014

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

¹³ Psalm 132:18.

*Arise, O YHWH, to Your resting place;
You and (the) Ark of Your might.¹⁴*

*Your priests, let them be clothed in righteousness;
and Your saints, let them shout for joy.¹⁵*

For (the) sake of David, Your servant, do not turn the Face of Your Messiah.¹⁶

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He desired (it) for (a) habitation for Him.¹⁹*

*“This is My resting place forever;
here will I dwell for I desired it.”²⁰*

*Her provisions I bless, I bless;
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*And her priests I will cause to clothe with salvation;
and her saints for joy will shout!²²*

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¹⁴ Psalm 132:8.

¹⁵ Psalm 132:9.

¹⁶ Psalm 132:10.

¹⁷ Psalm 132:11.

¹⁸ Psalm 132:12.

¹⁹ Psalm 132:13.

²⁰ Psalm 132:14.

²¹ Psalm 132:15.

²² Psalm 132:16.

²³ Psalm 132:17.

²⁴ Psalm 132:18.