

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST LIVES ON

Our sermon for this Sunday of the Resurrection Season is taken from our Psalm. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

*Cause to restore to me (the) joy (of) Your Salvation,
and uphold me (with a) noble spirit.¹*

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

In 2010, the Exaudi Sunday sermon was also proclaimed from the 51st Psalm. The theme ancient of the day, was “Hear our Lord.” It followed upon the arsonist attack this congregation suffered. This was proclaimed then, “In a way, our arsonist(s) gave us a good illustration of that which Jesus promised His Church, and the opportunity, again, to declare sin [as] sin, and forgiveness – God’s.”

That was then, this is now. Today, four years later, the Word of God chosen for this Sunday centuries ago is still applicable, the theme is still the same. In the last 48 months, God called into the Church triumphant 14 souls (who can never fall away from the Church). Six people rejected God’s gifts and have fallen away from this confession of the Faith. God moved 26 souls (most of them in four families) from this area to congregations around the country. All of those last are still friends with CLC and we do see them from time-to-time. They carried away with them the right understanding of Law and Gospel and the hunger for receiving God’s gifts in the time-tested public services of Christ’s Church. Finally, God has, since May 10, 2010, not counting you who have not officially joined the membership role yet who continue to receive God’s gifts as part of His family here, God has added 68 sinner-saints to His Body in this place.

God did not ask us to conduct that census. We mean no insult to the Holy Spirit in offering out such numbers. We believe, teach and confess that God alone grows His congregations at times, shrinks them at others, opens new mission starts

¹ *Psalm 55:14.*

and closes Christian assemblies according to His will.

That being stated, it is an observation that God has raised this congregation from the ashes of May 2010 in so many ways. There is a spirit of joy and cooperation among us. That was shown most recently in our coming together to console Phyllis, to support our Vicar-elect and to support our Long-Range Planning Committee. Next weekend, God will give us opportunities to share our gifts in the Church work day here and the painting of Vicar's office at the Campus Christian Center.

God's Word among us, founded upon the proclamation of sin and forgiveness is the means by which He continues to build us up in the Faith. Almost all the vestiges of the fire are gone. Renewed hope has blossomed among us as God has moved us to step up efforts to reach those who have not heard of Christ-crucified through the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. For all those reasons and so many more, I determined today to present you with the sermon which was preached here on Exaudi (Hear, O Lord) Sunday, 2010, in the presence of media reporters. One third of this congregation has never heard that which follows, and, of those present today, I daresay, for half or more of you, these are fresh words:

"In the Gospel, Jesus spoke of the trials, persecutions and troubles that those who were of the world – those who hold not the true Faith – would bring upon the faithful, for His sake. Jesus' promises are real for us, perhaps more so now that we have suffered an earthly loss at the hands of him, her or they whom the authorities will find in God's good time, as they work in their God-given vocations. (He was found...)

"This also is true, this building and its contents have been damaged, but the Church of God in Christ Jesus has not suffered any loss. While you may have suffered shock, anger, disbelief and so forth at the events of this week, you have not lost the Church. Remember, the Church is that which God has built out of living stones. The New Testament Church is composed of all the members who have been

called by God into His eternal house, who have been built upon the foundation stones of the apostles and the prophets and faithful of old, who have died, some horribly, in the Faith, yet live in Christ even now. One cannot kill the Church of Jesus Christ by burning her buildings – for they will not last through the fires of the Last Day. One cannot kill Christ’s Church by killing her members, for they live forever in Him. But, history has shown, repeatedly, that when the confessing Church is persecuted, she rises stronger and with more living souls in her, than when she is left alone! With this knowledge, the Church cries out even as she has done this morning:

*Cause me to hear joy and gladness,
let rejoice (the) bones You have broken.²*

“The faithful, you, are free to sing those words, because you believe and know that God will always bring the results of evil to the eternal good of His people. The founder of the Church, Jesus, has promised to never leave her nor forsake her. He is with her in her troubles, for He has already borne all of them into the grave. Jesus is with her in her reconstructions, for she is His creation, and He will preserve her. So that all who hear the words declared today may know what the true Church is about, God has called His Church to proclaim:

- Christ-crucified into death for the forgiveness of all your sins, and the sins of the whole world, is found in today’s Psalm;
- Christ-arisen from the dead that you may know that God has made repentant and forgiven sinners – you, we pray – right with Himself comes forth from today’s Psalm;
- Christ-ascended to the right hand of the Father to fill all things, to rule all things, to place our human flesh at the pinnacle of creation, is under this day’s Psalm;
- Christ’s gift, the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father, is remembered in this day’s Psalm. Hear again the Word of God:

Purge me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

² Psalm 51:10.

*wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*³

“For 3,000 years or so, in multitudes of languages, the true Church of the One True God, has chanted, sung, or spoken those words with the understanding that they declare that which only God can do. They reveal the work that would be done by the One Mediator between God and Man, Christ. This Church declares Him to be Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary and Son of God in One Person. He alone could take the Old Testament means of grace – declared today in the purging with hyssop stalks and washing with water – and apply them to all the faithful, of both the Old and New Covenants. It is to Christ alone that any sinner may turn to find true divine forgiveness, and in that forgiveness, purity in his or her inmost being, spiritually and bodily.

“That reality is for arsonists. It is also for you common, everyday sinners. Christ’s forgiveness, and intercession and mediation with the Father who judges all, is for you who merely tell lies. It is for you who break the inconvenient laws of the land – traffic laws, tax laws. It is for you who ignore the Law written in your hearts, and the accusing consciences that let you know when you have done so. It is for you who have desired that those who start illegal fires come to an horrible end without due process of law. Christ’s forgiveness, His washing of sin, is for you who would continue to gossip, to spread half-truths about your neighbors. The cleansing and washing, more than outward actions, truly inward workings of the Divine, whole-human regeneration, that the Psalmist and the Church and all the faithful, ask for is found only in the One Who changed forever the Rite of ritual washing – Baptism; Who was raised upon a tree, Who was given to drink from the hyssop stalk, whose blood was shed to set wash away sin’s stain from humans.

“The writer of today’s Psalm believed with all his heart. King David, the

³ *Psalm 51:9.*

divinely inspired human composer of our day's Psalm, when he recorded His song, had committed horrible sins. He had been caught in his sins – God Who sees all things, Who judges all people, revealed King David's sins to man. God's chosen messenger, named Nathan, uncovered David's sins, adultery and murder, so that he would understand that he had not just sinned against his lover's husband, but against God. In reality, Nathan gave David a gift when he, through a simple story, declared to him his sins. He called the King to repentance, that is, to turn from his sins, not just sorrow over them, to desire to walk in a new manner of life, the life of forgiveness. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

*Create in me (a) clean heart, O Elohim,
and (a) steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cause not to cast me away from Your Face,
and do not take from me Your Holy Spirit.⁴*

“In various languages, for more than 1,200 years, those words of how one lives in a life of forgiveness have been chanted daily in the New Testament Church's daily morning and evening services. They are declared so regularly in the life of the Church so that the faithful, you, I pray, who desires to turn from his or her sins, will know that it is God who makes such turning possible. He alone, through the means He chose, makes that which is stained with lawlessness against God, sin, from the moment of every human's conception, God alone creates the pure, clean, lawful heart in any human being. God alone makes pure in His sight any sin-filled human being. Humans, you dear ones, cannot in your sinful natures, cooperate with God in this holy work. He alone does His work of forgiveness through the means He chose. In the New Testament era that is His Word and His Sacraments – Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution the Holy Supper in particular. God uses these simple means to prevent you, the sinner who is aware of your sins, from facing eternity separated from His Presence. In the

⁴ *Psalm 51:12-13.*

Presence of God, in the earthly means He chose – man’s declaration of His Word, man’s administration of His Supper, human hands washing with the Word – in the Presence of God, sinners receive that which turns them, you, from sin, namely forgiveness, so that you are not separated from Him forever.

“To be cast away from the loving Presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was a fear that was real to King David when he confessed his sins to Nathan the prophet, and thus to God. His immediate predecessor, King Saul, on account of his unrepented sins, had suffered such a reality. He had died with everything God had given him in this life stripped from him. From a lack of faith and the repentance that comes with it, King Saul had even ordered his own death. David did not want to suffer the same life and end on account of his sins. So, when he was turned from them by the Word of God, He sang out today’s words of confession and trust. Perhaps you recall how our responsive recitation of today’s Psalm began:

*Have mercy on me, O Elohim, according to Your steadfast love,
according to Your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions;
cause to thoroughly wash me from my iniquity,
and from my sin cleanse me.⁵*

“Those words are an appeal to God, not just for His perfect justice, but for His long-suffering, unconditional love. They are words you may pray whenever you have sinned, are aware of and troubled by your sins, and want to turn from them. Your words this morning declare how deep sin runs in you; it infected you from the moment of your conception. Of your own free will, power and strength, by your good words and good works, you cannot free yourself from the evil that infects you.

“That is why you cry, as King David did, to God to bring you forgiveness and purity from His loving-kindness. Your appeal is to God’s revealed nature, to not will the death of any sinner, to rescue you from your sins. And those same truths apply

⁵ *Psalm 51:3-4.*

to those who burn churches. In fact, if you are one of those setting these fires, know that Christ Jesus took your sins upon Himself, almost 2,000 years ago. He bore your sins into the grave, shedding His blood to wash away your trespasses against him. Yes, even church building arsonists can be forgiven. And, if you are a forgiven sinner, then you will want to make right that which you have done, to confess your sins and to receive the judgment of the State as a result of your actions, and take what comes as a forgiven, redeemed person who lives even now with Christ, in His Church, into eternity. The prayer of forgiven King David can be your prayer:

*Cause to restore to me (the) joy (of) Your Salvation,
and uphold me (with a) noble spirit.⁶*

“If you are not an arsonist, just an everyday sinner who does just the ‘little’ wrongs against your fellow man and God, you too can sing that song of hope and promise. Understand that all sin, no matter how trivial it may seem, is sin, and can serve to separate you from God. All sin, without God’s forgiveness, serves to keep the sinner apart from God. With God’s forgiveness you can call to Him to restore the Joy of His Salvation, His Jesus, even when trials and persecutions for the Faith come upon you, and us. With God’s forgiveness comes a noble spirit, that true human nature our first parents have to do the ethical thing in all situations, to will to do the human good you have been freed in Christ to do.”

Here ends the sermon for “Hear O Lord” Sunday, May 2010. Here in our midst, are the confessors raised by God from the ashes of that week. The Church of Christ lives on! This you know to be true, because,
CHRIST IS RISEN!

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

Resurrection IV (LSB One-Year Series)
Psalm 51:1-12; Ezekiel 36:22-28; I Peter 4:7-11; John 15:26-16:4

⁶ Psalm 55:14.

June 1, 2014

Paster Michael S. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

Translation, second draft

To (the) Choirmaster,
(a) Psalm to David.⁷
In (the) coming to him (of) Nathan the prophet,
when he went to Bathsheba.⁸

Let it be, O Elohim, as to Your steadfast love, as to abundant, Your mercy blot out
my transgressions;
cause to thoroughly wash me from my iniquity, and from my sin cleanse me.⁹

For my transgressions I know, and my sin before me (is) ever;
against You, You separately, have I sinned,
and the evil in Your sight I have done;
so that You are righteous in Your sentence,
blameless in Your judgment.¹⁰

Behold, in iniquity I was brought forth,
and in sin did me conceive, my mother.
Behold, truth You desire in (the) inward being,
and in secret heart wisdom cause to teach me.¹¹

Purge me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and than snow I shall be whiter.
Cause me to hear joy and gladness,
let rejoice bones You have broken.
Cause to hide Your face from my sins,
and all my iniquities blot out.¹²

Heart clean create in me, O Elohim,
and steadfast spirit renew within me.
Do not cause to cast me away from Your Face,
and Spirit Your Holy do not take from me.
Cause to restore to me joy Your Salvation,
and spirit of willingness me uphold.¹³

⁷ Psalm 51:1.

⁸ Psalm 51:2.

⁹ Psalm 51:3-4.

¹⁰ Psalm 51:5-6.

¹¹ Psalm 51:7-8.

¹² Psalm 51:9-11.

¹³ Psalm 55:12-14.