

**OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS!**

Hear again the Word of God from our Trinity XIII *Psalm*:

*I will cause to instruct you,  
and I will cause to teach you in (the) Way you should go;  
I will counsel you under My Eye.<sup>1</sup>*

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

Today's Propers, the primary readings that change from week-to-week, began, as is the Church's helpful tradition, with a Psalm. It is one of the seven penitential Psalms found among the 150 Psalms in our Bibles. From it, the theme of this day was set by the verse that was chanted before and after the Psalm. That means that we are to understand that the 32nd Psalm is one of instruction and counsel given long ago by a teacher of the Word of God to the hearers of the Word. The Psalmist's intent continues as it still leads those who hear it to confess their sins and receive God's forgiveness.

That is what these words set their hearers up to receive:

*I will cause to instruct you,  
and I will cause to teach you in (the) Way you should go;  
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.<sup>2</sup>*

With words like those, the antiphon verse prepared us for the high point of the Service of the Word, that is: the Gospel reading. Therein, Jesus, in a manner similar to the Psalm, used an illustration to instruct, teach and counsel. That He did, and still does, in order to lead His hearers to confess their sins and receive forgiveness.

Jesus' story of a Good Samaritan is familiar to many people. Even those who are outside the Church use the phrase, often perhaps without knowing the full divine instruction, teaching, and counsel that lays behind it. For those who hear Jesus' call to follow Him, through a word picture of an injured man and the one who stopped to

---

<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 32:8.*

<sup>2</sup> *Psalm 32:8.*

care for him, Jesus' call remains for you to continue to show mercy to neighbors in need.

That the day's Psalm, and the day's readings that flowed into our ears following it, is one of divine counsel to mercy, should be no surprise. This is the time of the year that we remember the Lord has chosen to work through His Church, through her members, through you. It is both divinely and humanly reasonable for you to whom mercy is given by God to understand that you are freed to show His mercy to others.

Another way of saying that is that, *the doctrine of the blessedness of forgiveness* leads one to remember that he or she is liberated from sin to share in life the fruits of forgiveness. The foremost of those emphasized this Sunday this year is that God, Who continues to give you mercy, is calling you to think, speak, and act in Christ-like mercy toward your neighbor. This the Psalm begins to make clear each Trinity XIII, with words such as these:

*Blessed be the one whose transgression has been forgiven;  
whose sin is covered.  
Blessed be (the) man to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity;  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*<sup>3</sup>

Today, in this Lord's Service to you, those two Old Covenant beatitudes, the opening lines of the Psalm of the Day, were chanted just after you heard these words: *"In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*<sup>4</sup> That means that those beatitudes, the first chanted by Vicar, the second chanted by you, were to apply to you – as individuals whose sins had just been placed as far away from you as the East is from the West! Did that truth, or something similar to it, come into your heart and mind when you heard those blessings?

---

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 32:1-2.

<sup>4</sup> LCMS Commission on Worship, 2006. *Lutheran Service Book*, "Divine Service Setting Three," St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 185.

If so, wonderful, you heard the Holy Spirit working through them to apply them to you. If not, repent of inattentiveness – whether it came by distraction or by just going through the motions – to the Lord’s Word to you in His Service. Know that Christ Jesus fulfilled the Word of today’s Psalm for you. He gave you the benefits of that Word when you were washed in the rush of waters – connected to His Word – that washed away your sins. That should free you to reflect upon how blessed you are in hearing Jesus speak to you today. After all He still says of you, to you:

*Blessed be the one whose transgression has been forgiven;  
whose sin is covered.*

*Blessed be (the) man to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity;  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.<sup>5</sup>*

The first of those beatitudes you heard applied to you already in holy absolution. It was reinforced in you with the Lord’s call to you to return to the benefits and blessings of Holy Baptism. Now, hear that the second blessing describes your forgiven state before the Lord God Almighty. That is, that the sin that still clings to you; and the sins you still practice through omission of God’s Word in your life; and sins of commission of those things that break His Commandments, those too you are called to confess. As you continue to do so, God then applies these words of promise to you:

*Blessed be (the) man to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity;  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.<sup>6</sup>*

As you remain in Christ’s forgiveness, the Lord God does not impute to you any transgressions of His Holy Word. Great! That promise sounds like it is good. So what does that word “impute” mean? In terms of theology (literally God-words) to impute something to someone is to ascribe something to him or her by virtue of a similar quality in another person.

So, the Psalmist continues to say that the quality of iniquity – sin, all trespasses against God’s Holy Word (that which is a result of Adam’s original iniquity) – is not

---

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 32:1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 32:2.

ascribed to those whose sins are forgiven. They were lifted from you who remain confessing your sins and receiving God's forgiveness.

Well, where did those sins go? They were then imputed as sins and ascribed to another. That Another is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus, in Himself was no sinner. (Think of the Second Article of the Creed). "The transfer of our sin to Him was a purely juridical divine act." Scriptures such as this declare that truth: *the One not knowing sin, for us sin (God) made (Him) (II Cor. 5:21a)*. That is, the Psalm declares a great exchange that happened, centuries before it occurred. That is, that Jesus took our sins, He took your sins, upon Himself, and carried them into the grave. Bearing our sins, carrying your sins, He felt the wrath of God, which manifested itself through *God's verdict of condemnation and rejection, which Christ felt in His soul, just as if He personally committed all sins of mankind.*<sup>7</sup>

So, bad for Jesus, good for us? Remember, it was proclaimed that an exchange took place. If Jesus got sin, what do those who are forgiven receive? They, you, receive Christ's righteousness! That is, through a purely divine judicial act (think of a heavenly courtroom, not an earthly one) God pronounces you who are in yourselves ungodly – righteous (c.f. *Rom 4:5*)! *As He has declared the righteous Christ to be unrighteous, so He declares men, who in themselves are unrighteous, to be righteous.*<sup>8</sup> Or, as the Psalm continues to declare:

*Blessed be (the) man to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity;  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*<sup>9</sup>

So, that is you in Christ, for you have been given Jesus' original lack of sin, and His Spirit that holds no deceit. Wonderful. You are declared right with God in Christ Jesus. You are freed from the wages of sin – eternal death and separation from God in

---

<sup>7</sup> Pieper, F. *Christian Dogmatics*, v. 2. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951. 310.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 524.

<sup>9</sup> *Psalm 32:2.*

eternity. Now, what? Our Psalm continues with a call to remember to daily confess your sins with these words:

*When I was silent: my body wasted away in my groaning all day (long).  
For day and night Your Hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was overturned (as) in(the) heat of summer. Selah.<sup>10</sup>*

That describes the state each of us is in, the condition that you may be in now, when you are attempting to hide in some sin known only to you. It describes the pangs of conscience you feel when you are troubled with that which continues to nag at you. And then the Psalm is marked with a pause word.

That word the Greek-speaking Jews of 200 B.C. or so translated with a phrase we often render: *pluck the strings*. It is used to emphasize that which you, in your unrepentant but troubled state experience.... Hammer, hammer, hammer...stop. Think. The divine pressure builds up in you. Then, the Word moves you release, to say with the Psalmist:

*I caused to acknowledge my sin,  
and my iniquity I hid not. I said,  
"I will cause to confess my transgressions to YHWH;"  
and You did forgive (the) guilt of my sin. Selah.<sup>11</sup>*

Confess! Reveal! Spill it all out to God (in private alone with His Word; in Corporate Confession with the Congregation; in Private Confession before the Pastor)! Then hear the words your confession demands: *You did forgive the guilt of my sin*. Brothers and sisters in Christ, you who bear His imputed righteousness before the Father, the only reason to confess your sins is that you might hear God's Word of forgiveness spoken to you.

If you have been trying to confess your sins while making up some formula in your mind to answer for God's absolution, stop that! It is not necessary, and you can't

---

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 32:3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 32:5.

count on your own thoughts to provide comfort when the deceiver, the devil or his underling whispers in your conscience, “Are you sure you are forgiven?”

God gives you His Word of absolution from His Word. Hear that from Scripture, in texts such as in today’s Psalm. Remember that God has given you pastors and father-confessors (think: in the home) to declare His Word of Holy Absolution upon you! Really, you heard, and we pray, received that today. OK. Then what? Our Psalm continues:

*Therefore, let all godly men offer prayer to You in (the) time  
(in which You may be) found,  
surely (at the) rush of great waters they will not reach him.<sup>12</sup>*

You have confessed. You continue to hear God’s Word of Absolution from His Word and His Word-bearers. You are declared godly in Christ. So, you are called to offer up prayer to God in this accepted time. The Psalm then calls you to remember when another godly man, or two godly men – Noah and Moses – offered prayers for deliverance.

God saved the first man through the waters of the global flood. Do you think of that this time of year whenever you see the rainbows during the monsoons? Those beautiful colors are not given by God to be what those with seared consciences have chosen for their meanings. They are to remind all the faithful, in every generation, that God has promised to never destroy the world by water again. Those almost daily rainbows can also be used to remind you that you have been saved from the rush of great waters – the deluge of sin – through the quiet waters of Holy Baptism. So much for Noah and you.

God also saved a second man of prayer, Moses, through the waters of the Red Sea. God piled up the great waters, and the people with Moses walked through them on dry ground. Then, God drowned all those who were pursuing His chosen nation in

---

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 32:6

the rush of great waters. Just so, God saved you from the rush of waters that washes away sin. This the Psalm reminds you of with words like these:

*You are (the) hiding place for me;  
from trouble You preserve me.  
You do encompass me (with) shouts of deliverance. Selah*<sup>13</sup>

That section also concludes with a pause, indicated by the ancients by the plucking of strings. The Word is calling upon you to recline in the protection the Lord offers freely to His forgiven ones. God is doing for you what Jesus was doing when He called the canon lawyer to repentance. God is even now fulfilling these words of promise for you:

*I will cause to instruct you,  
and I will cause to teach you in (the) Way you should go;  
I will counsel you under My Eye.*<sup>14</sup>

His Word in the Psalm has led you to the Great Exchange. Your sin has gone to Christ, His rightness with the Father has come to you. The Psalm then has taught you to continue in confession and absolution. That forgiveness, the Psalm instructs, *is always received by faith.*<sup>15</sup> That faith, the Psalm counsels, is the Faith of Christ, Who it declares with these words:

*(To) the One who trusts in YHWH, he'sed surrounds him.*<sup>16</sup>

Christ Jesus fully trusted in the Father to deliver Him from death when He had borne the whole worlds sins into the grave. Christ Jesus commended His Spirit into the Father's Hands, fully trusting that He would raise Him from the dead. In the mercy that surrounds Him, Christ Jesus gave you His Faith, with the downpayment of the Holy Spirit, in the Face of the eternal Father. God did His mercy upon you when He with water and His Word, washed your sins away. His present and eternal mercy

---

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 32:7

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 32:8.

<sup>15</sup> Tappert, et al. *The Book of Concord*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959, 129.163.

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 32:10.

brings you present and everlasting forgiveness. Christ is your righteousness: the forgiveness of sins! His Word encompasses you.

His Word is to flow from you. God's Word of mercy for you frees you to share His mercy with others. Remember, Jesus still says: "*You go, and you do likewise.*"<sup>17</sup> Unlike the lawyer of old that first heard words like those, you know that Jesus' Word actually gives you His power to do His mercy for your neighbors!

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

Trinity XIII (*LSB* One-year series)

Psalm 32; Zechariah 4:7-10; Galatians 3:15-22; Luke 10:23-37

August 26, 2018

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse* BBA, MDiv, DMin

*Soli Deo Gloria*

---

<sup>17</sup> *Luke* 10:37b.

TRANSLATION, THIRD DRAFT: To David,(a) Maskil:

*Blessed be the one whose transgression has been forgiven;  
whose sin is covered.<sup>18</sup>*

*Blessed be (the) man to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity;  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.<sup>19</sup>*

*When I was silent: my body wasted away in my groaning all day (long).<sup>20</sup>  
For day and night Your Hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was overturned (as) in(the) heat of summer. Selah.<sup>21</sup>*

*I caused to acknowledge my sin,  
and my iniquity I hid not. I said,  
“I will cause to confess my transgressions to YHWH;”  
and You did forgive (the) guilt of my sin. Selah.<sup>22</sup>*

*Therefore, let all godly men offer prayer to You in (the) time (in which You may be) found,  
surely (at the) rush of great waters they will not reach him.<sup>23</sup>  
You are (the) hiding place for me;  
from trouble You preserve me.  
You do encompass me (with) shouts of deliverance. Selah<sup>24</sup>*

*I will cause to instruct you,  
and I will cause to teach you in (the) Way you should go;  
I will counsel you under My Eye.<sup>25</sup>  
Do not be as ((a) horse, as (a) mule, without understanding;  
with bit and bridle (the)trappings (with which) he may be curbed,  
lest it will not stay near you.<sup>26</sup>  
Many are (the) pangs of the wicked;  
but (to) the one who trusts in YHWH,  
he’sed surrounds him.<sup>27</sup>*

*All of you be glad in YHWH;  
and all of you rejoice, O righteous men,  
and all of you cause to shout for joy, all (you) upright in heart!<sup>28</sup>*

---

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 32:1.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 32:2.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 32:3.

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 32:4.

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 32:5.

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 32:6.

<sup>24</sup> Psalm 32:7.

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 32:8.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 32:9.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 32:10.

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 32:11.