

In Nomine Jesu

RECEIVING PEACE AND REST

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

Our sermon for this Lenten Wednesday is drawn from our Psalm, with our thoughts guided by the following translated verse:

*Behold, truth You desire in (the) inward being,
and in (the) secret heart You will cause to teach me wisdom.¹*

This year, this day, we bring to an end the theme of this year's Lenten series at Faith Lutheran and Catalina Lutheran churches. Those are being proclaimed in services of the Word as rest and peace. The Word has been focusing us upon receiving God's precious gifts. These bring true rest and peace in Christ that are worked in the believer by the Holy Spirit as one hears God's Word. In other words, today's sermon is about you receiving peace and rest from, in, and with God and your fellow sinner/saints.

Those are wonderful treasures to reflect upon as many of us continue to participate in some sort of fast for another week and a half. (Even if that is simply abstaining in the Lord's Services now from the Greater Glorias, and soon, from the Lesser Glorias). That leads us to consider that these weekday services of Lent are given to us that we might be moved in heart and mind to reflect on who, and what, we truly are, with penitential attitudes.

As we, as you, participate in receiving God's gifts in other than weekend services, the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God moves you to consider your very natures. He does so that you might more greatly increase your thankfulness for God's gift of His Son. After all, He is the One Who, though He bore your sins, as well as the sins of the whole world, into death, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity had no need ever for such penitential thinking concerning Himself.

¹ *Psalm 51:8 MT.*

However, the friend of the God in three Persons, a man named David, the King, son of Jesse, did need to reflect upon his sinful state. His words, in part are remembered today, in order to focus us a bit sharper on that which this Lenten series has been given to us to receive. Toward that end, hear again today's theme text:

*Behold, truth You desire in (the) inward being,
and in (the) secret heart You will cause to teach me wisdom.²*

From that short text, we face two questions which you should now answer to yourself and God alone. If the answers you are about to think about in your heart and mind trouble you, you are free to speak to your pastor-confessor, that you might hear Christ's forgiveness spoken directly upon you. Since the chosen theme verse from today's Psalm inform us of that which is God's desire for His people, that is His will for you as you are present here in this Lord's Service, how have you been doing in holding fast to truth in your inward being? How has your secret heart been at receiving Divine Wisdom?

If you are troubled about your answers, and desire to hear Jesus forgive you, through the mouth of a called and ordained servant of the Word, you should recall that there is actually a Rite for that in your hymnals. It is there for personally and individually receiving God's gift of forgiveness, through Holy Absolution, that which our truly Evangelical confessions have no difficulty calling a Sacrament. There, on page 326, are these teachings, drawn from Scripture...

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven... and, a bit later on the same page,

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular... when they absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our

² Psalm 51:8 MT.

dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

Yes, I left out the Law part of the second quote. That is because our Psalm is doing that, God's alien work, in us right now. That surely occurs as we hear and reflect on our own inability to meet God's desires for us as the people who bear His Name. Today's Psalm, the 51st, is driving you, me, and us to consider ourselves before God. With God's gift of forgiveness for all, and specifically for those who are repentant sinners, in your heart and mind, hear again from today's Psalm:

*Behold, truth You desire in (the) inward being,
and in (the) secret heart You will cause to teach me wisdom.³*

Through His proclaimed Word, God is causing to teach you His wisdom. Through the mouths of His called – both ordained (pastors) and commissioned men (in some congregations, these are men who may be called teachers, Lay Deacons, Vicars, and possibly, Elders) – in our day God speaks to His people as His Word is declared into ears opened by His Holy Spirit to His truths. Those ears, dear ones, we want to believe, are yours! Hear again as our other Psalm for this day, the Psalm of the week, proclaims words that give you His words of truth and wisdom, those which bring His gifts of peace and rest in this life:

*All of you cause to give thanks to YHWH, for He is good;
for into eternity is His steadfast love (Psalm 136:1).*

If you have ever wondered if you have words to say, chant, or sing to God that will be acceptable to Him, you do. In that Psalm, you call yourselves to give thanks to the One, True God, as you give the divine reasons that you are freed to recall, His merciful, unconditional, immovable, long-suffering love for sinners endures forever! That declares to us that right (orthodox) Christian worship is found in first hearing God's Word... receiving from Him as He reaches down to us with His forgiveness, life

³ Psalm 51:8 MT.

and salvation. Then, right (orthodox) Christian worship responds to those gifts as we reflect His Words back to Him.

Think of this hearing and responding from the perspective of the husband to wife communication wisdom that is often gained by long-term married couples. Now, I am going to speak from the husband's perspective, for that is what I am! In the first years of marriage, husbands try to find new and creative ways to address their beloved ones. Eventually, sooner or later, husbands will run out of such, and be left wondering how then to communicate their love. Flowers, candies, dinners out, breakfast in bed are all nice, but there are only so many ways those can be offered. Eventually, even us slow-learner husbands realize, we pray, that our wives really appreciate it if we actually hear them and respond to them in ways that our wives truly appreciate. We learn to turn from trying the "latest and greatest love language," to saying and doing those loving things our wives want to receive! This, we hopefully learn, is not manipulation. It is training in love-language that is truly appreciated.

All of that is spoken to illustrate that the divine marriage between God and His Church is one in which the Church learns His love language and echoes it back to Him. In that, God is blessed, and His people are blessed – for they learn to own His Word of promise for them. Today, those promises we are learning to express this way:

*Behold, truth You desire in (the) inward being,
and in (the) secret heart You will cause to teach me wisdom.⁴*

As you heard earlier, God's desire for His Bride, His Church, for you, is to hold Truth in our inner being. Since Jesus is the Truth, the Word is calling us to have Jesus in our inward being. As God has given each of us His Holy Spirit through the Water and the Word of Holy Baptism, we have the deposit of His faithfulness, love, peace and rest. As the particular work of the Holy Spirit is to point God's people ever to

⁴ Psalm 51:8 MT.

Jesus the Christ, we are led, by the Scripture-proclaimed, to true Wisdom in our secret heart. This is where God's Word works to bring and sustain Faith in Christ. That truth is being reinforced in us, in you, through the weekly verse we have been hearing each Wednesday:

You are in the midst us of, O YHWH, and Your Name upon us is called, cause to leave us not (Jeremiah 14:9b).

The truth, as the Word declares, is that God, in the Person of Jesus, is present wherever two or more of His people are gathered around His Word. Pastor, people and Altar (that is, Christ present in God's Word purely proclaimed and His Sacraments administered rightly) are where Christ has promised to dwell. In places such as this, He brings His gifts of peace and rest in a fallen world. He offers them, through His Word, to those who have been named with His Name, who daily will to turn from their sins and walk in newness of life). That, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is a divinely revealed truth.

That stands against the thinking of our culture. For our society, truth has been relegated to that which is relative. People think of truth being anything which a particular individual may hold to be true. Or they may think of truth as that which any collection of individuals holds to be true. For some, truth has been tossed into the dustbin of non-existence.

On the other hand, other people are beginning to be drawn to congregations where genuine divine truth is proclaimed. They are those such as we whom God has moved past a false-absolute that, "there are no absolutes," to the reality that the Truth is. By God's grace, we believe that which His Word declares: humans may be aligned to the Truth. This is a day for such truth to be proclaimed, that you and might be found holding fast to it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The truth is that Jesus' sacrifice to the Father and atoning blood is God's answer to our Psalm's petition:

*Mercy me, O Elohim, as (to) Your steadfast love,
according to (the) abundance (of) Your mercy blot out my transgressions;
cause to thoroughly wash me from my iniquity,
and from my sin cleanse me.⁵*

There are three words in particular that the Psalm uses to remind you of how God has had mercy on you. The Hebrew word (פֶשַׁע) translated, “transgression,” is used to describe any and all “tearing apart,” or “breaking loose,” from God and His Word. The Hebrew word (חַטָּאָה) translated, “sin,” defines any and all deviations from all things that are well-pleasing to God. A third Hebrew word used in the Psalm elsewhere (עוֹן) translated, “iniquity,” can be used to define any perversion, distortion or misdeed when weighed against God’s Word. All these, the Psalm reminds you, God has willed to wash away from you.

On account of that, today you have peace and rest in God, for He has mercied you according to His steadfast love. He has washed you through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. There He has caused you to die with Christ. As you daily return to your baptism, through confession and absolution (in your prayers, publicly in your Church, and privately, perhaps in your pastor’s study), God, in His mercy, blots out your transgressions. Through such divine gifts, given through earthly means, He repeatedly grants you peace and rest from all your troubles through His forgiveness.

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

Lent III and Lent V Wednesdays (Catalina Lutheran and Faith Lutheran 2019 Lenten series)

Psalm 136: 1-16; Psalm 51; Jeremiah 14:9; John 14:27

March 27, 2019 and April 10, 2019

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Soli Deo Gloria

⁵ Psalm 51:3-4.

TRANSLATION, THIRD DRAFT

To (the) Choirmaster,
(a) Psalm to David.⁶
In (the) coming to him (of) Nathan the prophet,
when he went to Bathsheba.⁷

Let it be, O Elohim, as to Your steadfast love, as to Your abundant mercy blot out
my transgressions; cause to thoroughly wash me from my iniquity, and from
my sin cleanse me.⁸

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.⁹

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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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.¹²

⁶ Psalm 51:1 MT.

⁷ Psalm 51:2 MT.

⁸ Psalm 51:3-4 MT.

⁹ Psalm 51:5-6 MT.

¹⁰ Psalm 51:7-8 MT.

¹¹ Psalm 51:9-11 MT.

¹² Psalm 55:12-14 MT.