

Lent 3C

Ezekiel 33:7-20

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

The sermon for the third week of Lent is from the Gospel of St Luke 13:1-9. The sermon is entitled, "Everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness"

**Grace Mercy and Peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.**

"Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?" the vine dressers asks.

And the man said, "Sir let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down"

After hearing the parable about the fig tree...the parable about bearing fruit in keeping with repentance, what is the first thought that comes to mind?

For many, it is three simple words..... I must do.

I must bear fruit.

I must do good works.

I must love God and neighbor

I must...I must...I must....

That is to become righteous, innocent, and blessed in front of God.

This is how many describe the Christian life.

Of course,

Are we to bear fruit? Yes.

are we to do good works? Yes.

Are we to love God and neighbor? Yes.

Yet is this how we would solely describe what it means to be a Christian?

In the Creed, the third article explains the life of sanctification, that is, how are we sanctified, how are we holy?

And when we confess the words, I believe in the Holy Spirit....the Holy Christian Church and so on.....this is the moment where we acknowledge, that indeed, it is not by my own reason or strength that I have come to Him, no, it is the work of the Holy Spirit, who calls you by the Word, from the law that convicts to the Gospel that saves....

Indeed....the Christian life....is the life of repentance....

Repentance has two parts....contrition and faith.

Contrition that is, the godly sorrow of our sin, yes, the sorrow that is from the law of God, namely the 2nd use of the law, the law as mirror, where we are shown the crushing law....the utter depravity of our sin, that as we were born into sin, the condemning sentence dismisses any notion that we have the ability, or the strength ourselves to make our way to God, no.....this is how destructive sin truly is..... but also faith....believing in our Savior Jesus Christ....yes, faith that rests upon the “for you “ of the Gospel.....

And thus, just as Jesus commanded in Luke 24, to preach repentance and forgiveness, the preached Word continues, by the Work of the Holy Spirit, to sustain and keep you in the faith....

Absolved of our sins.... we pray that in this newness of life given to us in Christ Jesus, through the Word and the Sacraments, this is who we are as we serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessed..... Therefore, we bear fruit...as good works follow.

Good works.

Whether it was the Galileans, or the eighteen, or even the story of Job and his friends, who asked, what have you done to merit these tragedies in your life.... The continued speculation of who was the worse sinner, it's as if the focus is upon oneself and the merits that you either bring or not bring to the table....in other words, we must do these things, in order to gain favor with God....and if we do not, whether it is the Galileans or the eighteen, this could be our demise....and if this is your faith, if the onus is on you....there are two roads you will inevitably tread upon. one of pride and the other....of despair.

Pride that says, look at me, look how much I have done, the badge of self-righteousness is gleaming as if somehow this will bring us confidence, yet the deception is, pride turns from the Word, turns from repentance and forgiveness, and ultimately turns from the Cross, because why would pride need anything else but themselves...

The poisonous sin of pride is something you and I are well aware of, for if we trust in ourselves, depend on ourselves, there pride is nestled so comfortably in our frail flesh, that soon, our flesh says we are not so frail after all, yet this the deception of pride, striving to be our own little

gods, sufficient in ourselves or so pride says.....and thus in regards to good works....how good works become the fuel of the prideful heart....And thus we repent....

The other road to which we are well aware of, is of despair. In regards to good works, how shallow our works are, how empty....So stricken by our sin, that the devil continues to accuse, continues to send you down this road of despair that says, there is no need to repent...for not even the Lord and His Cross, and His empty tomb can rescue you from your much deserved condemnation.....and thus the despaired will say, surely Jesus died for everyone else....but for me...I am not so sure.....

And thus, whether it is pride or despair, Jesus calls us to repentance.....

Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Indeed, this should be our demise. We ought to perish for our sins, yet Jesus says, unless you repent, for when we confess our sins, our Lord is faithful and just and He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness....

When we confess our sins.....indeed, Jesus does not say work it out, no...the Lord promises you that your sins are indeed forgiven, your sins are cleansed and you are declared righteous, for you shall not perish because there is the Christ who stood in your place, to perish upon the Cross for you.

This is how you are declared righteous, by the one who bore and took upon your sins, shed His blood on the Cross to redeem you and

charge to you His righteousness. You are righteous because you are forgiven and covered by the blood of lamb Jesus Christ.

This is how you are innocent....for when our Lord accounted for you by His death and resurrection, there you were reconciled to God, called to be His own, gathered by His Word, and thus, thought deserve the stinging sentence for our sins, our Lord declares you innocent...by His own blood.....

This is how you are blessed....for by His very Word, the incarnate Word, our Lord took upon the flesh, so that you would be blessed forever, for indeed you are for the Lord has wrote the story of salvation by His very blood, from His crucifixion to his empty tomb, you are indeed blessed for by His grace you are saved to everlasting life.

So the next we confess the 2nd article of the creed, I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, dwell upon the explanation....for why does Jesus do such things....that is to die and rise....that is to call you in the water and word...that is to give you His true body and blood at the Lord's table.....indeed, to redeem me...a lost and condemned person....so that you may be His own....and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

This is who you are...not by what you have done, but by what Christ has done for you.....and thus, it is not an I must, good works are not motivated by your burdensome view of the law, no....rather, what a joy it is to serve under our Lord's name....for you are serving not to earn righteousness, innocence and blessedness.....no....this is who you are by His grace....already....the proving ground is shaky no more, for our Lord is the rock, the foundation and by His promise you proceed in this faith....loving and serving and bearing fruit....what a joy this is.....to serve Him in righteousness given to you in this very Gospel, to

serve Him in innocence, as you rest upon the baptismal to which our Lord robed you in His righteousness, to serve Him in blessedness, blessed already you are by what you receive at the Lord's table..... given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins....

Indeed, you are already there, so go now in good cheer...for you are forgiven, you are redeemed, you are saved and rescued from sin death and the power of devil...and thus you go, serving and bearing fruit, not with the burdensome "I must" but rather, with his grace, as you serve under His grace...in everlasting righteousness innocence and blessedness.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.