

The Third Sunday after Easter - Jubilate

Hymns: 201, 207, 312, 205

The INTROIT

(Ps.66:1-3)

P: Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands;

C: sing forth the honor of His name; make His praise glorious.

P: Say unto God, how terrible art Thou in Thy works;

C: through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee.

The COLLECT

Almighty God, who shows to them that are in error the light of Thy truth to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Lamentations 3:18-26

And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.111:9, Lk.24:46)

P: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.

C: Hallelujah!

P: It behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead:

C: and thus to enter into His glory. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Peter 2:11-20

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(1 Cor. 5:7)

P: Hallelujah! Christ, our Passover:

C: is sacrificed for us. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. John 16:16-23

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith.

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

1 Peter 2:11-20 — “As Free”

INTRODUCTION

I. BELOVED, I BESEECH YOU-ALL AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

II. ABSTAIN FROM — SUBJECT TO

III. AS FREE

CONCLUSION

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1 Peter 2:11-20 — “As Free”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is the Third Sunday after Easter and the appointed Epistle reading is 1 Peter 2:11-20:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

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In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

True Christians are truly strangers to the world. They live in the world but not as part of the world. The world does not know us. We do not belong. As the world observes us, we are seen as outsiders. Today’s text addresses this and magnifies the contrast between those who are slaves of worldliness and those who have been set free to live as slaves of God and otherworldliness. Today we hear of the true freedom to live according to the renewed nature of goodness and genuine freedom. Today we hear proclaimed the freedom to love freely and to live in the freedom of love.

I. BELOVED, I BESEECH YOU-ALL AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

Love. This is the cause of our existence. Love is of God, for God is Love. From His own image and in His image God created us. Love is a powerful force, for God is Love and Love is of God. Thus, Love is greater than all other powers in the universe, for Love is greater than the universe. Love is from beyond and comes to the cosmos and creates and recreates all that is good.

Our text begins with the Apostle Peter writing and addressing his readers as “**Beloved.**” All who receive this greeting in the name of Jesus receive what it conveys. Consider the connection of this word as it is spoken to us. Of whom does God speak when using this word?

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matt 3:16-17)

In Baptism, God places the holy name of Beloved upon us, as we are given the name of Jesus and are accounted as sons of God and heirs with Jesus. Thus, marked with the very name of God’s Beloved Son, we are called out and set apart unto God. With the name of God’s Beloved Son, we also are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to abide in us and with us and to keep us in communion with the fullness of God’s love in Christ Jesus. All that God’s love offers, the Holy Spirit causes to be born in us through the faith that is of Jesus. All that is in connection with the name of God’s Beloved Son is made to be ours in the Communion of God’s Beloved. And so, the apostle addresses us as *Beloved*.

This is something that cannot be known apart from the Holy Communion of Christ in His body. Only in communion with Christ can one be known as God’s Beloved. Thus, this is entirely foreign to the children of the world. The world was created for God’s Beloved, but because of the theology of choice and of human reason, also called decision theology, the world does not know God’s Beloved. Thus, addressing us as God’s Beloved, St. Peter also addresses us as strangers and pilgrims. Truly, even though the world was created for us, we are strangers and pilgrims in the world. We are born in the world, but by faith God calls us to be aliens in the world, as those who live beside the citizens of the world yet without any citizenship of our own in the world.

II. ABSTAIN FROM — SUBJECT TO

Thus St. Peter writes:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

As those who have been regenerated into God’s Holy Communion of His Beloved, we live among the Gentiles but have no part in the ways of the Gentiles. God has set us apart or sanctified us from their ways. Thus the apostle beseeches us to remember who we truly are so that we live as God’s Beloved and that we do not become enslaved again by the things from which God has set us free.

The apostle beseeches us, “**Abstain from, or literally, hold yourselves away from, fleshly lusts, which war against, or literally, strategize against, the soul.**” Our soul is our being. When God created Adam, He formed Adam from the dust of the earth. But man is not merely a composite of minerals and chemicals. For God then breathed into Adam the breath or Spirit of Life and man became a living soul. This is why the devil’s temptation to chose or to decide to be like God was really a theology of death, for in deciding to be like God according to

his own reason and strength, Adam rejected the Spirit of Life, and became in essence a zombie, a walking dead man. It was only by means of the Gospel that the LORD came and administered to overturn the decision theology of Adam and his wife that Life was restored through the promise of the Seed of the woman. For this reason, Adam gave his wife the new name of Eve, that is, Life.

This is what makes the life of faith a life of alienation from the world. This is why the world rejects and even hates God's Beloved. This is why the devil works so hard to persuade the churches to become more like the world. This is why the devil strategizes by means of fleshly lusts to minimize the alien appearance of the churches.

This is a very effective strategy. It worked in the beginning when mankind was pure and innocent and it works today. It is truly crafty. The devil inches his way into the body of Christ, seducing God's Beloved to imagine that for the sake of reaching the world that the Church should incorporate into its proclamation and worship the fleshly lusts of the world.

But this is not the way of God's Beloved. No. St. Peter reminds us that the winsomeness by which God wins souls is by the exact opposite way of the fleshly lusts. St. Peter writes, saying, **"Be subjected therefore to all human ordinances through the LORD."** Notice that this command is passive. *Be subjected* is a command that we not change what God has established in us. By His grace He has recreated in us this nature of subjugation. It is the same as with the Lord Jesus who subjected Himself to the ordinances or institutions of men, even to the point of subjecting Himself to Pontius Pilate. In this world, God's Beloved obeys and subjects Himself to the human institutions so long as doing so is not sinful. This is what we also do as God's Beloved lives and works in us so that through our lives of faith the world sees God's Beloved in the world.

Our translations tend to say that we should do this for the sake of the LORD, but this phraseology is often misleading. For we think that this means that we should choose to do this for the LORD's sake as though we were making a decision for the LORD. But what the Holy Spirit is teaching us through St. Peter's words is that this is what the LORD has already worked for us and in us through Baptism. This is who God has made us to be in communion with Christ in His body. This is what we proclaim every time that we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, gathered into His Holy Communion as God's Beloved.

III. AS FREE

This is no more of a choice that we make than it is when we wake up in the morning and find that we are still alive and breathing. This is who we have been regenerated to be. This is the freedom of the life into which we have been reborn.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

People imagine that the way to God and the way to godliness is through choosing and striving to do good things. But the opposite is what really happens. The harder that we try to do good things, the more we cover up our maliciousness by our attempts at godliness. This is not the way of Christ.

The way of Christ is the way of freedom through knowing the Truth. Jesus says that He is come that we may know the Truth and the Truth shall set us free. He further explains that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He does not present to us a way of life. Rather, He comes to us as the Way and the Life. We do not choose this for ourselves, but rather, He gives this to us. This is what He does for us through Baptism. We washes us with the Word of God in connection with and in the water. But Jesus *IS* the Word of God. So, when God's name is applied to us in and with the water, Jesus is poured over us and into us and Jesus takes our sin and gives to us His name of righteousness. He gives to us His Holy Spirit, and with His Holy Spirit He gives to us the new life that is in His blood. Then He carries us to His Table and serves us His body and blood in and with the bread and the wine so that all that is in Communion with Him is communicated also to us.

This is given to us freely by God's grace. This is the freedom into which God calls us in the Communion of His Beloved. In communion with Jesus, we receive His holiness. The Holy Spirit actually enters into us and makes us holy, even as God is holy. It is not by our actions or choices or decisions that we are brought into communion with God and are made holy. Certainly not! Contrarily, it is by bringing us into His Communion that God makes us holy again so that our actions and choices and decisions are then in communion with Him and therefore are holy because of what the Holy Spirit continually works in us and for us and through us.

This is the freedom that the world cannot know. This is the freedom that on account of sin and on account of fleshly lusts seems to the world to be enslavement and tyranny. Yet every person of the world strives to find goodness, never achieving it except by the cloak of judgment of others so as to seem somewhat elevated over others.

Isn't it amazing that the most judgmental people are those who preach tolerance? The world's preaching of tolerance always means that those who acknowledge the goodness of the LORD are to be counted as evil and alien. Yet those who are truly in Christ judge no one according to their own judgment. Rather the Beloved of the LORD live in accord with the freedom that Christ has purchased for all the world, thereby demonstrating that the world stands already in the judgment of their unbelief. It is the world who judges itself, openly and defiantly declaring itself in rebellion against the God who is Love. Those who live by faith live free of these things. They willingly live as those who are subjected to the authorities. In fact, all the good that the authorities demand of God's Beloved they willingly and joyously do, and even go far beyond, giving of themselves beyond the taxes and helping others even when no law demands it. This they do not from a sense of bondage to any obligation or requirement, but in the freedom of the Beloved of the LORD. God's love sets us free to live in love and to love freely. And by this, the Truth of God's Love is made manifest so that those who speak against God and His Beloved are silenced regardless of how loudly and hatefully they shout and act out. And no matter how the world rages, the Beloved of the Lord continue in the confidence and contentment of His love, having the peace of God in and for themselves and demonstrating His peace to all men.

CONCLUSION

How often we forget who we are! We are the Beloved of the LORD in whom His goodness and love abides. Because we forget this, we struggle to be good and to find our way in the world. But when we hear the Holy Spirit's declaration to us in the Holy Scriptures, then we remember whom God has made us to be. Then we live free of our troubles and free of our sin. Then we do not have to decide to be good, for we are free to confess our sinfulness and to be turned to God's goodness and mercy which endures forever. Then we do not try to cover up our

unholiness, but rather, we trust God's holiness at work in us. Then when we see our neighbors we do not imagine that we have to do better than they do, but instead, we look upon them with the love into which God has called us to live. Then truly all that we do we do as those who are free, free to live in love and love freely. It is like waking up to discover that we are still alive and breathing. We do not decide to continue breathing. We simply live and the breathing comes naturally as a part of being alive. So it is with our lives of love and holiness. We awaken each day and give thanks to God for His goodness and love and we live as those who are free, free because God has spoken to us through His Son calling us into His Communion of His Beloved. This is whom God says that we are. Since God says it, therefore we believe it and we live as those who are free. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.