

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 3, 399, 314, 422

The INTROIT

(Ps.68:1,5,6,35)

P: God is in His holy habitation; He is God who setteth the solitary in families.

C: The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.

P: Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered;

C: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who is always more ready to hear than we to pray and are wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of 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

2 Samuel 22:21-29

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them* down.

For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.28:1-2,7; 90:1)

P: My heart trusteth in God, and I am helped:

C: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him.

P: Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock:

C: be not silent to me; hear the voice of my supplications. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Lord, Thou hast been our Dwelling Place in all generations.

C: Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 15:1-10

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:

C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 18:9-14

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

2 Samuel 22:21-29 —

“THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS”

INTRODUCTION

I. THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS

II. FOR I HAVE KEPT THE WAYS OF THE LORD

III. THEREFORE THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS

CONCLUSION † FOR YOU ARE MY LAMP, O LORD

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2 Samuel 22:21-29 —

“THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS”

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

The Old Testament reading appointed for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity is 2 Samuel 22:21-29:

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them* down.

For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

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

INTRODUCTION

Today's texts provide deep and abiding comfort to the troubled heart and soul. In our texts that have been appointed for our comfort on this day we learn of the LORD's declaration unto those whom He has justified and sanctified to be called His own holy people. Those who have been humbled to acknowledge their sins so as to confess them openly and to be turned from them to the LORD in His mercy, to such sinners God declares His righteousness as their own, that they may come to Him boldly and freely by grace through faith.

I. THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS

Today's text may sound confusing to those who have been bombarded with the works oriented ways of the preachers of our day. How does today's text fit with the preaching of the declaration of justification by grace through faith? How does this text fit with understanding that salvation is by grace and not by works? How can Lutherans continue in such adamance concerning this doctrine that man is saved by grace apart from good works? How are we to understand the claims that David makes in this text?

Today's text comes very near to the end of the second book of Samuel and very near the end of the life of King David. Of this man the LORD declared, **“I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.”** (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22)

But the LORD said this of David before David had been anointed as King over Israel and before David had abused his authority as king to commit adultery with Bathsheba and before David had murdered Uriah in order to try to conceal his sin with Uriah's wife. Was the LORD right about David, in spite of all of this? Was David truly a man after the LORD's own heart, a man who did all of the LORD's will?

King Saul was rejected as the LORD's anointed because Saul rejected the Word of the LORD and modified God's command. (1 Samuel 15) The LORD declares that rebellion is equal to witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. What was Saul's rebellion and stubbornness? Saul allowed the worship of the LORD to be changed by the people. Rather than following God's command, Saul used some of what the LORD had commanded to be destroyed and saved it to be sacrificed unto the LORD. Why was this wrong? Why was this cause for Saul to be rejected by the LORD? The reason is that Saul rejected the Word of the LORD and taught the people to reject the Word of the LORD. Saul taught the people that worship is something that people choose to do, rather than being that which the LORD establishes and maintains. Saul taught the people to worship the LORD according to their own reason and strength rather than in complete concord with the Word of the LORD.

This is why David, even though he sinned terribly before the LORD, could nevertheless say: **"The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me."**

David understood **"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"** (Psalm 130:3) David understood, **"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness."** (Psalm 31:1) And as Jeremiah prophesies: **"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** (Jeremiah 23:6) and again: **"In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness."** (Jeremiah 33:16)

David understood what Saul was unwilling to hear. The LORD is our righteousness. His Word is the means by which we are called to trust the Gospel. His Gospel is that which justifies and sanctifies. Thus David trusted the LORD's declaration of righteousness and did not try to make himself righteous by sacrifices. David looked to the promise of the Christ, and walked in this promise all of his days, being turned by this promise from his sins, turned from his own attempts at justifying himself, turned to trust in the mercy of Almighty God. Thus David was truly righteous and a man after the LORD's own heart, by grace through faith.

II. FOR I HAVE KEPT THE WAYS OF THE LORD

Thus David confesses, **" For I have kept the ways of the LORD."** This was David's confidence. Even though David knew himself to be a sinner, even though David transgressed against the LORD in terrible ways, even though David could not number his sins, even though David confessed to be a sinner even from conception in his mother's womb, nevertheless, David was righteous because of the ways of the LORD. David trusted not in his own righteousness, but trusted in the LORD as his righteousness. He knew the promise of the Seed of the woman. He knew the promise of the Seed of Abraham. He knew the promise that the LORD Himself would be born of woman to fulfill all righteousness and to offer Himself as the one true sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Thus David kept the ways of the LORD, trusting that the ways of the LORD, the means of grace, would not fail, could not fail, for they are the LORD's ways. Truly David lived in the blessedness of the one true faith. He confessed:

For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.

How can David make such an outrageous claim? How can David claim to have been upright before the LORD and to have kept himself from his iniquity? What one of us can make such claims? What one of us can claim to have lived his life in uprightness before the LORD and to have kept himself from his iniquity? How can we stand before God when we know that we have sinned against Him in thought, word, and deed? How can we even ever hope to confess all of our sins? Who can number his transgressions?

Thanks be to God that we do not have to seek a way, for the LORD Himself is our way. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Like David, each one of us can call out according to the LORD's own righteousness that He has put over us. David received the LORD's righteousness through circumcision and the Passover and the sacrifices of the LORD's house. Likewise, we have received the LORD's righteousness through Baptism and we continue in His righteousness through the Holy Supper of His Holy Communion. It is for us as Isaiah prophesies:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

Truly, in Baptism, God has clothed us with the garments of salvation and has covered us with the robe of righteousness. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is given to us in place of our false righteousness. Our corrupt attempts at goodness are all wiped clean and replaced with the righteousness of God in Christ.

Even when we hold up our deepest, darkest iniquity in the light of the Gospel, even that darkness is dispersed completely so that all that remains is the declaration of our justification and sanctification worked for us in our baptism. Nothing remains of our sin after the Lamb of God takes it unto Himself for us. Joined to His body through Baptism, nothing remains of our uncleanness. Only His righteousness remains with us so that we may boldly claim His righteousness as our very own. With this knowledge filling our souls, all that remains for us is to march forward to receive the meal of Thanksgiving in His Holy Communion of forgiveness and life.

III. THEREFORE THE LORD REWARDED ME ACCORDING TO MY RIGHTEOUSNESS

Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them* down.

Oh how glorious is the confession of the heart that trusts in the mercy of the LORD! As we hear these words of David and realize that this is the confession that the one true faith generates in our hearts as well, do we not find our hearts ready to burst with the joy that the LORD imparts to us? Do we not find ourselves ready to burst into tears and even sobs of pure and holy joy? Do we not find ourselves falling to pieces in our hearts, ready to fall to the ground on our faces giving thanks and praise to the LORD?

Just think! None of our failures count as anything! None of our bad choices in life count against us. None of our weaknesses can bring us down. None of our selfish actions can condemn us. Why? Because the LORD does not look upon us and see us according to what we have done. Heavens no! He looks upon us and sees us according to His own eyesight, the eyesight that sees us through the blood of Jesus mingled with the water that is poured over us and given and shed for us in the blessed Sacrament for us to eat and drink unto life everlasting!

Oh what joy! Oh what peace! Oh what cause for everlasting thanksgiving!

Yes! The LORD will save the afflicted! The LORD has rewarded us according to our righteousness in Christ Jesus! The reward that Jesus purchased for us is given freely to us in His body! The reward that we have earned as the wages of our sin He took for us. All that remains for us, by grace through faith, is our righteousness in Christ!

CONCLUSION † FOR YOU ARE MY LAMP, O LORD

This blessed confession of true faith that is declared in our text for this day concludes with these marvelous words of David:

For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

In this world of darkness, where our own efforts bring us disappointment upon disappointment, we have the lamp of God's Word, the LORD Himself, to lighten our darkness. This is what Simeon declared when he encountered the baby Jesus in the Temple. We sing it every LORD's day as we rejoice in having partaken of the LORD's body and blood in the blessed Sacrament. We shall do so again in a few minutes today. Yes, the LORD is our lamp. He has poured Himself out to us in Baptism and continues to come to commune with us in the Holy Supper. He has pronounced us to be righteous with His own righteousness. He calls us to gather in His name and receive His righteousness again and again so that we may cry out joyfully with David and with all the saints of all time and even everlastingly, "**The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.**" 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.