

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 250, 238, 307, 200

The INTROIT

(Ps.86:1,3,5)

P: Be merciful unto me, O Lord

C: for I cry unto Thee daily.

P: For Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive

C: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.

P: Bow down thine ear, O Lord,

C: hear me for I am poor and needy.

The COLLECT

Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth, and reigneth, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Deuteronomy 32:39-40

See now that I, *even I, am he*, and *there is no god with me*: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.102:15-16; 115:11)

P: The heathen shall fear the name of the Lord:

C: and all the kings of the earth Thy Glory.

P: When the Lord shall build up Zion:

C: He shall appear in His glory. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord:

C: He is their Help and their Shield. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

Ephesians 3:13-21

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

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 7:11-17

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.

Deuteronomy 32:39-40 — “I Am He . . . I Live Forever”

INTRODUCTION

I. I, EVEN I, AM HE

II. I KILL AND I MAKE ALIVE

III. I LIVE FOREVER

CONCLUSION

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Deuteronomy 32:39-40 — “I Am He . . . I Live Forever”

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

The Old Testament reading appointed for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity is
Deuteronomy 32:39-40:

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

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

INTRODUCTION

“I am he . . . I live forever!” This is how God identifies Himself to His people. Through His people this declaration is made known to the world.

I. I, EVEN I, AM HE

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me.

Oh that the people of God would hear this and live in this knowledge of the LORD their God! There is only one God. This God created the universe and all that exists, both visible and invisible. This God created mankind and established us upon this earth to live as His children. He gave His Word so that we would know the life that He gives in His Holy Communion. When His children disobeyed and brought death upon themselves, this God came calling for them to come out of their hiding place to confess their sin and hear His promise of Salvation. This Salvation was enacted even from the foundation of the earth (Rev.13:8).

And so, at the end of the ministry of Moses, as the people were about to go forth into the land of promise, Moses is given this word from the LORD to give again to the people. The people need always to be reminded of the identity of their God and Redeemer. He says to them, **“See now that I, I am it, and no gods with me.”** I am He or I am it! There is no other besides Me, so do not be deceived. I am it. I am He.

St. John records that the Lord Jesus used this same phrase in identifying Himself to the people. On at least two occasions the Lord Jesus referred to Himself as this God. John records that on one occasion Jesus referred to Himself as “I Am,” and those who heard Him identify Himself by this identity sought to stone Him. (John 8:58) John also records that when Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of the temple guard that they asked for Jesus of Nazareth, He identified Himself saying, “I Am” or “I Am He.” (John 18) He repeated this after the men picked themselves up from having fallen to the ground.

This is the God that we serve or worship. This is the God in whom we believe. This is the God who comes to us this day and makes Himself known to us through the ordained means.

He speaks to us and calls us to faith so that we may truly hear, “**See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me.**”

II. I KILL AND I MAKE ALIVE

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

Is this a threat or a promise? It is both. How it is received depends upon where a person stands in relation to this statement. In the beginning, when the LORD God first created the heavens and the earth to provide a world in which mankind would live, God’s goodness is all that Man knew. Man knew nothing of evil, for Man knew only the LORD as his God. It was only after the serpent tempted Man to doubt the fullness of God’s goodness that Man knew evil. The temptation was to know both good and evil. The LORD warned that this temptation would bring death. But Man doubted. Man chose to step beyond what the LORD had told him. By doing so, Man came to know evil. His knowledge of good was now corrupted. Man no longer knew good. Now Man only knew good as something from which he had separated himself. He had turned away from God in order to know both good and evil. Now, man could only know evil, fearing and hiding from the One who is Good.

But in His goodness, the LORD came and provided the Word of promise and restoration. He told of His plan from eternity by which Man would be saved. He told of the promise of the Seed, the Savior. Through this pronouncement hope and life were restored. God would die in the place of Man so that Man would be made alive again. And so the death that Man has brought upon Himself would be killed in the body of Christ. Through Baptism God kills the old Adam and raises to life a new Adam to live in His righteousness and purity forever. God washes away the sinful man so that the new man may live in Christ.

The LORD God declares that He kills and He makes alive, He wounds and He heals, and that there is none that can deliver or snatch out of His hand. To those who do not know the LORD, those who stand outside of His Holy Communion, this is heard as a threat. But to those who hear His voice and are turned to Him in the faith that His Word generates in the heart, this is a gracious promise. The Lord Jesus said this same thing to those who came to Him during His ministry.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. (John 10:25-33)

To the rebellious sinner who desires to rely upon oneself or upon someone or something other than the LORD this is heard as bondage and tyranny. To the person who refuses to

acknowledge the goodness of the Will of God, the announcement that no one can deliver from His hand is a threat. But to the person who has been converted by the Holy Spirit to trust in God's goodness and mercy, this is heard as the promise that no one can snatch the believer from God's tender Fatherly care and protection.

The sinful nature does not want a Jesus who is the almighty God. The sinful nature wants a savior who does as he is bidden by the one calling upon him. But such a savior is nothing more than an imaginary friend, one who has no real power to save, one who will fail the needy person in the end.

But the LORD God, Jesus, the Christ, has the power to rescue and to bind in faith to Himself all who trust in Him. They are bound not by their own faith, but by His faith and faithfulness. The faith that Jesus has lived for us and declared to be true, this faith is that which has the power to bind us to Him in unbreakable bonds of everlasting safety. This is the faith that generates in us the faith by which we believe. Since it is God's work and not ours, it can be trusted never to fail us. For God's work is everlasting. God's work is pure. This is our confidence. This is God's everlasting promise.

III. I LIVE FOREVER

This is why He adds to this proclamation these words:

For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

When the LORD says this, does He mean that He lifts an actual hand, a flesh and blood hand toward heaven and makes this promise? He most certainly does. For the Trinity is from eternity. He is without beginning and without end. His existence is timeless. Yet He enters into the time that He created for our existence in order to redeem us and save us. As the Incarnate Word, God lifts up His hand and promises that no one shall snatch us out of His grasp. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) In the person of Jesus we receive and encounter the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9) When Jesus speaks we hear the entire Trinity. This is why we are baptized not into three names but one name, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If we call upon one we call upon the entire Godhead, for they are truly one.

For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

In the Hebrew this is an amazing statement that is hard to translate. For where He says, "**I live forever**" the verb is Qal perfect or preterite. The verb is actually past tense. In this passage the LORD literally declares, "**I have lived to the concealed.**"

He speaks of His life as past tense. He speaks of having already lived everlastingly. This is because He IS. This is why He speaks of things as already being, things that for us are still to come. This is why in Revelation 13:8 Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. This is why Jesus told the Jews: "**Before Abraham was, I Am!**"

People sometimes like to say that God has already gone down the road ahead of us. But this falls way short of the truth. God does not go down the road ahead of us, for He is the both the road and the destination. He IS. He does not lead us to a point in time but to Himself. He is our future. He is our Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. Thus He raises His hand to the

heavens and says: **“I have lived to the concealed.”** What is concealed for us as awaiting us in time He IS. This is why the apostles speak of the elect being predestined. From our timebound perspective it is predestination. From God’s perspective, it is what He knows to be for He has accomplished it for us even from the foundation of the earth. Our salvation is a done deal. We can count on it. We can believe it with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

CONCLUSION

If only we truly trusted God. Then all of our fears, all of our worries, all of our sorrows, these all would be turned to everlasting and unending rejoicing! Thanks be to God that our salvation does not depend upon our faith. Rather our faith depends upon our salvation. For Jesus, the LORD, is our salvation. Our faith is God’s work, poured out to us as a gift in Baptism along with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. Our strength is set before us at the Lord’s Table, given and shed for us to eat and drink as often as we gather together into His name. This is all by God’s gracious promise and decree. He is the one who does it. He is the one who moves us to trust Him so that we receive His gifts through His means of grace. In today’s Gospel reading we heard how the Lord Jesus came to the city of Nain and restored the widow’s son to life again. He did this without anyone asking Him. No one expected it. No one even imagined it. But purely from His merciful compassion He did it. The result was thanksgiving and rejoicing in the name of the LORD. This is what God is doing for us today as well. Come and partake of the great Eucharist, the feast of thanksgiving in the life that God has given to us in Christ Jesus. 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.