

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 39, 32, 305, 50

The INTROIT

P: The Lord, our God, is righteous in all His works which He doeth;

C: for we obeyed not His voice.

P: Give glory to Thy name, O Lord;

C: and deal with us according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

P: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God,

C: in the mountain of His holiness.

The COLLECT

Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 65:1-2

I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me*; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts.

The GRADUAL

P: The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord:

C: and Thou givest them their meat in due season.

P: Thou openest Thine hand:

C: and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord:

C: Lord, hear my voice. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

Ephesians 5:15-21

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*.

But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

Ephesians 5

15. See then how circumspectly (exactly) you-all walk, not as unwise but as wise,
16. redeeming the time (season), because the days evil are.
17. Through this do not become mindless (gutless, heartless, irrational), but sending together (comprehending) whom (who, what, which, why) the will of the Lord.
18. And do not be intoxicated (drunken) with wine, in which is unsafeness (anti-wholeness), but be filled (be completed) in spirit,
19. speaking to yourselves psalms and hymns and songs spiritual singing and strumming (making music) in the heart of you-all to the Lord,
20. Eucharisting (giving thanks) always over all things in the name of the Lord of us Jesus Christ to God and Father,
21. being subjected to one another in fear of God.

Ephesians 5:15-21 — “Redeeming the Time”

INTRODUCTION

- I. SEE THEN HOW EXACTLY YOU-ALL WALK
- II. THROUGH THIS DO NOT BECOME GUTLESS
- III. EUCHARISTING ALWAYS OVER ALL THINGS

CONCLUSION

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Ephesians 5:15-21 — “Redeeming the Time”

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

The Epistle reading appointed for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity is Ephesians 5:15-21:

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

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

INTRODUCTION

Does life as a Christian ever seem hard to you? Today’s Epistle gives us the counter measure. In today’s text the dear apostle directs us to the life that the LORD our God has established for us in which we now live and walk and work and play. He speaks of redeeming the time because the days are evil. Surely we can see that the days are evil, but do we understand what he means regarding redeeming the time? It sounds hard, but in reality, it is wonderfully simple and easy.

I. SEE THEN HOW EXACTLY YOU-ALL WALK

See then how exactly you-all walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time (season), because the days evil are.

Wow, this is a marvelous opening for our text this day. Notice that the imperative or command is that we see, not that we walk. See is the imperative and walk is indicative. We are told to see then how we walk. Notice also that this is second person plural. He is not giving this command or admonition to us as individuals but as the Church. This is reemphasized at the end of today’s text when the apostle describes our communion together as **“being subjected to one another in fear of God.”**

This is a very narrow or exact way of walking. When those who are walking together do so as those who are being subjected to one another in fear of God, no one insists upon being able to express one’s own opinions, and no one demands to be given respect or to have one’s rights respected, and no one elevates oneself above anyone else. Rather, all are walking together in fear of God with God as the one doing the leading and ruling and speaking.

This is how St. Paul begins this chapter, saying: **“You-all become therefore followers (imitators) of God as children beloved.”**

This is a very lovely and accurate description of the life of the saints. We are God's children beloved. St. Paul could have said "as beloved children," but he chose this word order instead. He is emphasizing the manner in which God makes followers of us. First He regenerates us as His children. Then, through the preaching and the Supper He brings us close to Himself to know the exactness of His love to us.

We observe this even in our earthly families. We do not really know ourselves as beloved children when we are first born into the family. But when our parents nurture us and care for us and sacrifice themselves for us, we grow in the knowledge that we are children beloved. The natural response to this is to imitate those who love us. We look to our parents as our providers and our protectors and our teachers.

This is how God's children live, except that God never fails us. God's love is perfect and without limit. His goodness and mercy have no end. This is what St. Paul admonishes us to see.

See then how exactly you-all walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time (season), because the days evil are.

As we continue together, receiving God's grace and blessings, being united in His love, we continue looking to Him and following Him where He leads and we find that we walk together in true unity, with exactness because He is absolutely consistent in His dealings with us. He comes to us in the same way through the same means as He has promised. He forgives and renews and strengthens and edifies and justifies and sanctifies and guards us and keeps us day by day and week by week as we hear His calling and come to His loving presence together.

This is what St. Paul means, saying, "**Redeeming the time because the days are evil.**" Redemption has a price. The days were sold out by Adam millennia ago. He sold the days into the hands of the devil for the price of knowing what our loving Father protected us from knowing, that is, evil. And now all the days are evil because mankind has been enslaved to the evil one. But our dear Father has paid the redemption price. He has made the sacrifice by which the entire world has been bought back from this enslavement. And now, as we look to Him in faith, being brought into the safety of His kingdom through Baptism and continually renewed through the communion of the body and blood of our redemption, the time is redeemed. The means of grace are the means by which the time is redeemed. Even though the days are evil, as the Holy Spirit gathers us into the name of Jesus, He is with us to redeem the time so that the evil that is everywhere around us is powerless to separate us from His mercy and love. And as we partake together in His Holy Communion, the Gospel is preached and it goes forth even into the world so that even some of those who stand outside hear and are gathered with us unto the LORD, our loving Father.

II. THROUGH THIS DO NOT BECOME GUTLESS

To this the apostle adds a statement that we truly need to hear and heed.

Through this do not become gutless, but sending together (comprehending) whom (who, what, which, why) the will of the Lord.

The dear apostle is very much aware of how quickly we tend to change what God does for us into something that we must do. We turn God's grace into commandments that we must perform. Then we transform mercy into sacrifice and faith into a burden. Let's hear these two

sentences again together.

See then how exactly you-all walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time (season), because the days evil are. Through this do not become gutless, but sending together whom the will of the Lord.

The apostle instructs us to see how exactly we walk, and we very quickly change this into seeing that we walk exactly. Do you perceive the shift? The apostle tells us to see how exactly we walk by God's gracious Fatherly leading. But we often change this into how we must be careful to walk exactly as God has commanded. We take what God does for us and make it something that we must do. We hear that we are justified by faith and we hear a command that we must produce faith in ourselves so that we will be justified. On account of this false interpretation we become gutless or heartless. But St. Paul tells us not to do this to ourselves, but rather to continue sending together whom the will of the Lord. This sending together is more than understanding or comprehending.

The word is *suniami*. It comes from the sense of sending together combatants. This is what we are until we are brought together in the Lord. We are combatants. But God brings us together in His grace to live together in His Holy Communion. St. Paul tells us to continue sending together the combatants, that is, our sinful selves, to be filled with the Spirit through the means of grace so that instead of fighting against God and His saints we are joined together as one body. He says:

Through this do not become gutless, but sending together whom the will of the Lord. And do not be drunken with wine, in which is unsafeness, but be filled (be completed) in spirit, speaking to yourselves psalms and hymns and songs spiritual singing and strumming (making music) in the heart of you-all to the Lord.

In our desire to be following the Lord rightly or exactly we must not become gutless or heartless. This is where the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in us. The Scriptures speak of the gut or liver or heart as the place where the Holy Spirit works His miracles in us. We sometimes say things like: **"I sensed it in my gut."** and **"It pulled on my heartstrings."**

Here St. Paul contrasts the way that people turn to alcohol and drugs and other sources of comfort or relief to being filled with the Spirit who works in our gut or heart producing a very different comfort and relief. The Holy Spirit works in us, not merely as individuals but as a congregation so that we speak to ourselves psalms and hymns and join together in singing songs of spiritual instruction and edification and pluck the heartstrings of us all. Notice that St. Paul speaks of us as having one heart, saying, **"strumming in the heart of you-all to the Lord."** In the Lord we have one heart and one mind and one mouth even as in the Lord we are made to be one body. We do not each choose for ourselves a manner of worship, but together we speak the psalms and hymns and sing the songs spiritual that we have received together from the Church of old. This is the historic liturgy and the great hymns that we have inherited. These are the strumming of the Church of all ages. Yes, new hymns and songs are written in keeping with what we have inherited, and the old is the foundation for the new. This is why we have the Introit and the Gradual and the Kyrie and the Sanctus and the Agnes Dei and the Nunc Dimittis. This also is why these are set to tunes that are harmonious with the penitential and reverential heart and mind of the Church of all times. This is how we strum the heart of us to the Lord.

III. EUCHARISTING ALWAYS OVER ALL THINGS

St. Paul emphasizes this with the concluding portion, saying:

Eucharisting (giving thanks) always over all things in the name of the Lord of us Jesus Christ to God and Father, being subjected to one another in fear of God.

This eucharisting or giving thanks flows from the time being redeemed through the means of grace. Our lives are drudgery and agony and sorrow and disappointment and failure. Into this darkness and gloom comes the Gospel, and the light of God's mercy and love dispels the gloom and fills our heart with goodness and life and hope and joy and peace and love and unity. As the Holy Spirit gathers us together into the name of Jesus we come expecting to hear God's promises and to be fed the life of the blood of Jesus. His body unites us and His blood renews us in His forgiveness and life. This is the purest and most powerful thanksgiving of which we can partake. This is the thanksgiving that God Himself generates within us. This is the life to which God calls us. This is the meaning of true worship. It all comes together in the Holy Supper, where we Eucharist together not only as a tiny congregation in a specific locale, but with all the saints of all time and places, including those who are now with the Lord. We also are joined with the angels and archangels. This is the Communion of the Holy Trinity, in whom we all have our being together. In Him we share in the everlasting joy for which God has created us and redeemed us and regenerated us.

And in this we truly are continually being subjected to one another in fear of God. As we look to Him as His children beloved, we look to one another as true brethren of our Lord Jesus, who is our head, our Lord, our God.

CONCLUSION

Truly this is redeeming the time. The days are surely evil. Every day we experience the pain of sin in the world. We struggle in futility. Everything in the world works against us. Each day we feel age increasing and the failing of our bodies. Even youngsters experience daily the increasing responsibilities which they quickly discover are too great for them to fulfill. But God is faithful. God is our Father who loves us. He gathers us together and fulfills our every need. He comforts us with His mercy. He restores us with His forgiveness. He washes us into His kingdom. He pours out to us His Holy Spirit, who lives within us both individually and corporately, searching our heart and purifying us and sanctifying us. Such is our life together as He leads us and guides us so that we see how exactly we walk together by His grace. 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.