

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 248, 409, 316, 241

The INTROIT

(Ps.86:1-4)

P: Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me;

C: O Thou, my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee.

P: Be merciful to me, O Lord;

C: for I cry unto Thee daily.

P: Rejoice the soul of Thy servant; for unto Thee,

C: O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

The COLLECT

Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; 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

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (NKJV)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps 118:8-9; 108:1)

P: It is better to trust in the LORD

C: than to put confidence in man.

P: It is better to trust in the LORD

C: than to put confidence in princes.

P: O God, my heart is fixed;

C: I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

The EPISTLE

Galatians 5:25- 6:10 (NKJV)

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be

deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

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. Matthew 6:24-34 (NKJV)

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Galatians 5:25- 6:10 — “If We Live in Spirit in Spirit also We Should March”

INTRODUCTION

I. IF WE LIVE IN SPIRIT IN SPIRIT ALSO WE SHOULD MARCH

II. FROM YOU-ALL’S OTHERS THE BURDENS YOU-ALL TAKE UP AND FILL UP THE LAW OF CHRIST

III. FOR EACH THE SELF PORTION (INVOICE/TASK/SERVICE) SHALL TAKE UP

CONCLUSION

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Galatians 5:25- 6:10 — “If We Live in Spirit in Spirit also We Should March”

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

The sermon text is the appointed reading of the Epistle for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, Galatians 5:25 – 6:10:

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

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

INTRODUCTION

St. Paul's depth of understanding of the Gospel is truly amazing. When the Lord Jesus met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He turned the ardent pharisee's heart and mind upside down and inside out. Everything in which Saul had trusted was instantly shown to be sewage. Saul, which means *asked for* or *desired* was converted and renamed Paul, which means *little* or *small*. No longer was he the Pharisee who was admired for his attempts at obedience to the works of the law, but now he was a little man, no longer esteemed highly, one who counted all his own attempts at righteousness as sewage that needed to be flushed away by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, and whose strength was in need of constant renewal through the Eucharistic feasting upon the body and blood of Jesus. The strong and self-reliant Pharisee had become weak and entirely dependent upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Now he no longer spoke of those who by the flesh must strive to be perfect, but rather of those who by faith live and walk in spirit.

I. IF WE LIVE IN SPIRIT IN SPIRIT ALSO WE SHOULD MARCH

In chapter five St. Paul contrasts the life of those who in spirit are led versus those who in flesh are under Law. Those who live according to their fleshly nature are always striving for this and that. They live under Law, always facing their shortcomings and failures. They never measure up and must always strive to find a better life. They live by their own efforts. On the other hand he speaks of those who in their spirit are led. Rather than striving after anything whatsoever, rather, they follow the One who has taken up residence in their heart and has taken possession of their spirit. Rather than striving to do good, they simply follow in spirit the One who rules their spirit with the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Rather than striving to be faithful, they march in conformity with the peace that the Holy Spirit gives to them. Rather than striving to know what to do, they hear what the Spirit declares to their spirit.

The two ways are very different. They are, in fact, exactly opposite from one another.

St. Paul instructs us, saying, **“If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march.”** Notice that *we* is plural while *spirit* is singular. In Christ we have one spirit in which we live. In Christ our individual spirits have been washed and completely cleansed. In Christ our sin-dead spirits have been regenerated so that the sinful images of our spirits have been crucified through Baptism and joined to Christ in the image of His spirit. Thus, in Christ, through Baptism, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us and into our hearts so that our spirits are joined in holy communion with Christ’s spirit. Therefore our spirits are made to be one in Christ so that what Christ wills we will and what Christ does we do. This is a mighty miracle that surpasses all understanding. Nevertheless, this is the reality that is worked in us through our being baptized into Christ.

Thus, since we live in spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us through the Holy Gospel, so also we are led by the Holy Spirit to march together in spirit. Together we are one in spirit. We confess with one mouth and one mind the exact same faith that the Holy Spirit teaches us in our spirit. Since He works this faith in us, there are no schisms where this faith is embraced according to what He teaches. We do not walk according to our own ways, but according to the Way, which is Jesus. We do not choose for ourselves what we believe, teach, and practice, for the same Spirit of God lives in us and directs our spirit. He causes us to be baptized with the same Baptism and to eat and drink at the same Table. We do not do these things of our own accord but according to the leading the Spirit of God.

Therefore, as St. Paul continues instructing us, **“Never should we become vain-glorious one another forth-calling (provoking) one another envying.”** After all, how can we become vain-glorious when we live in spirit and in spirit we march? If we do not rely upon our flesh, that is, if we do not rely upon our own reason and strength, if rather we live in spirit and march in the way of our regenerated spirit, upon whom are we relying and upon whose reason and strength are we following? Observe the way of the Spirit of God. How often does the Holy Spirit speak of Himself? Does He not preach Christ crucified to our spirit? Does He not instruct us to rely solely upon Jesus? Does He not cause us to be baptized into Christ and to rise up from the water to eat the body of Jesus and to drink the blood of Jesus? If we live and march in spirit by the leading of the Holy Spirit, to whom will we look in all things? Will it not be Jesus to whom we look? Will it not be Jesus in whom we live and have our being?

What does St. Paul mean by not becoming vain-glorious that leads to provoking one another and envying one another? Vain-glory means empty-glory. What sort of glory is empty? What sort of glory leads people to provoke one another and to envy one another in the Church?

Think for a moment. What things are the most empty in our lives? What else but our works? As soon as we begin to focus upon our works we are emptied of holiness. The sanctification that the Holy Spirit works in Baptism completely disappears when we begin to strive to be good by our own efforts. For all of our attempts at righteousness are plainly declared by the Holy Scriptures to be nothing but bloody rags. What are bloody rags fit for? They are buried or burned. No one holds up a bloody rag as an accomplishment. No one holds up a bloody rag as something to be admired and treasured. No one holds up a bloody rag as something to be used again for any purpose whatsoever. A bloody rag is entirely empty of value and beauty and glory.

Yet how often do we hold up our works and admire them? How often do we even steal the glory from the Holy Spirit by imagining that our own faith is what saves us, rather than trusting in The Faith that the Holy Spirit works in us all through the means of grace? Yes, we are thieves. We want to make God's glory our own. We want to make our faith a work of righteousness by which we may have glory. We want our works of faith to be counted as glorious. And by so doing we empty ourselves of the righteousness that is in Christ and we empty ourselves of the glorious treasures of His grace. We turn the gifts of Baptism and the Holy Supper into our own works so that rather than relying upon God's grace we rely upon our own belief. Then we compare ourselves to others and either try to provoke them to envy us and our faith, or we see what appears to be something in them that we envy. Then we either try to tear them down or we strive to show ourselves better and more faithful than they. We try to out give them and out tithe them and to be more loving. Worst of all we try to be more tolerant and accepting than others, and even more tolerant and accepting than God Himself. What could be more vain-glorious?

But, St. Paul assures us, this cannot happen when we live in spirit and in spirit march. For our spirits are not alive by anything that we do and we do not march together in the oneness of spirit by anything that we do. Rather this is as Jesus instructed Nicodemus in John 3:6, "**That which is generated of the flesh is flesh even as that which is generated of the Spirit is spirit.**" Our living in spirit is something that we cannot do for ourselves, for we are born into this world according to the flesh, and the flesh is born dead in sin. No, we are made alive in spirit purely by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Our marching in spirit is purely on account of the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is not something that we choose. Rather, our marching in the unity of spirit is caused by the new life in which we live in spirit. This is God's doing, and we truly should give thanks for this good news. For what God does never falls short. We can trust with absolute confidence what God does for us in our spirit.

II. FROM YOU-ALL'S OTHERS THE BURDENS YOU-ALL TAKE UP AND FILL UP THE LAW OF CHRIST

Next St. Paul describes the form that this living and walking in spirit takes.

Brethren, if ever also is forth-taken a man in any side-fall, you-all in spirit restore the same one in a spirit of meekness, marking yourself that you not also be tempted. From you-all's others the burdens you-all take up and fill up the law of Christ. For if thinks anyone something to be this not being himself deludes.

Forth-taken or *toward-taken* is rather more strong than *overtaken*. To overtake someone is merely to catch and take hold of someone. But here St. Paul is speaking of a person also being taken forward or toward a certain thing or direction. This person has fallen to the side, in a different direction than the unified marching in spirit that he described above. This person has fallen by the side and is looking to other things, worldly things, things of the flesh and the Law. This person has become distracted by the worldly surroundings and the ways of the world and has become burdened again with the works of the Law. Rather than trusting in the works of Christ this person has begun to imagine that he must somehow make himself worthy before coming to Christ at the Lord's Table of life. This person has begun again to come to the Lord as an individual rather than in spirit marching.

Thus the apostle admonishes the rest to stop and to lift this burden from their brother, just as Christ has lifted this burden from us all. This is what St. Paul means by filling up the law of Christ. It is not as though we somehow do a work of our own, but rather, since we, as the body of Christ, have been given the burden or service of Christ, we take hold of our fallen brother and by means of the Word we lift from him the burdens that he has taken upon himself. It is not as though we take his burdens and make them our own. Heaven forbid, for we have no strength to carry even our own burdens. No! Rather, we use the powerful leverage of the Gospel and we direct our burdened brother to take the service of Christ, which He has carried for us, and therefore is light, even as Jesus declares, saying,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

In describing the burden or weight carried by the person who falls down under the weight of the Law, St. Paul uses the word, *baros*, which is a weight or something that causes one to be pressed down. But in verse 6, St. Paul uses the same word for burden that Jesus uses, *phortion*, which means *portion* or *service*. What is the portion that belongs to Jesus that He offers to us? It is the portion that is assigned to the sons of God. It is the glorious riches of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus tells us weary sinners to stop trying to carry the burden that He has carried for us and to receive from Him the portion that He has purchased for us with His own life and suffering and death.

If a starving person is rummaging through the garbage behind a restaurant, and the restaurant owner finds this poor beggar and washes him and gives him clean clothes and carries him inside and gives him a scrumptious feast, does this hungry beggar feel a heavy burden as he feasts upon the food or does he feel a sense of great relief?

Now, what if the person who finds the beggar is not the owner of the restaurant, but one of the dishwashers. And what if this dishwasher gently coaxes the beggar to come and meet the owner, who then provides water for the dishwasher to wash the man and clean clothes for the dishwasher to clothe the man and the fully furnished banquet table where the dishwasher brings the man?

This is what St. Paul describes for us in this text. How wonderful! How marvelous! Such is the life to which the Holy Spirit calls us in which we march together!

III. FOR EACH THE SELF PORTION (INVOICE/TASK/SERVICE) SHALL TAKE UP

Yes, in verse 6 St. Paul says, **“For each the self portion (invoice/task/service) shall take up.”** This is the portion of the kingdom of heaven that has been credited to each one of us. This is what it means to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 11:13)

This is what St. Peter reminds us also:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

The glory in which we boast and rejoice is the LORD’s glory, manifested in the body of Christ. As we come to the Lord’s Table and thereby proclaim His death till He comes, we boast of the glory of the LORD before all the world and we rejoice together in spirit. In spirit we have our life together and in spirit we march. The way of the flesh has no place in the body of Christ. For our portion or service is not hard labor. Our service in God’s kingdom is to eat and drink what He serves us at His banquet table. God does not call us to a life of strife but to a life of feasting. It is His holiness to which we are called. It is His life that we receive. It is His way in which we march together. This is the self portion that we are to take up. Truly this is a portion in which we live and rejoice together, when rather than looking to our own works we look to the works and service of Christ, our God and our Savior.

CONCLUSION

Truly even as St. Paul admonishes: **“If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march.”** It is sad that even as we hear this we almost immediately turn this into a work that we must do rather than hearing it as St. Paul intends it. Yet it is a wondrous statement. **“If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march.”** This is not a command but a statement of fact. When we get this through our thick heads we realize what a wonderful life God has called us to live. If we have been baptized into Christ so that we are joined with Him in His body, we should also march with Him in the way that He has prepared. This is a cause and effect relationship. Christ and His life are the cause. Baptism is the means by which He effects it for us. Once we are living in spirit, so also we must necessarily in spirit march, not by way of anything that we choose to do, but because of who we have been regenerated to be. If we are in Christ, we will march onward in Christ. Likewise, we will observe our baptized brethren when they forget who they have been made to be and we will declare to them what Christ has done and we will remind them of their portion in Christ so that they are lifted up by the good news of the Gospel to come to the Table and be strengthened for the new day. This is the life in which we share. This is our life in Christ. 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.