

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

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest 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

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them 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

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

(Galatians 5:25-26)

ει^{G1487} COND ζωμεν^{G2198} V-PAI-1P πνευματι^{G4151} N-DSN πνευματι^{G4151} N-DSN και^{G2532} CONJ στοιχωμεν^{G4748}
V-PAS-1P μη^{G3361} PRT-N γνωμεθα^{G1096} V-PNS-1P κενοδοξοι^{G2755} A-NPM αλληλους^{G240} C-APM
προκαλουμενοι^{G4292} V-PMP-NPM αλληλοις^{G240} C-DPM φθονουντες^{G5354} V-PAP-NPM

If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march. Never should we become vain-glorious—one another provoking, one another envying!

Gal 6:1 αδελφοι^{G80} N-VPM εαν^{G1437} COND και^{G2532} CONJ προληφθη^{G4301} V-APS-3S ανθρωπος^{G444} N-NSM
εν^{G1722} PREP τινη^{G5100} X-DSN παραπτωματι^{G3900} N-DSN

Brothers, if ever also should be foretaken a man in some side-falling/alighting/landing, . . .

Jesus saith unto her, *Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* (John 4:21-24)

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. NEVER SHOULD WE BECOME VAIN-GLORIOUS
- III. BROTHERS, IF EVER ALSO SHOULD BE FORETAKEN A MAN IN SOME SIDE-FALLING

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

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them 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 confronted 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, even worse than sewage, filthy bloody rags that carry infection and disease and death. 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 of 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 formerly presumptions 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 through faith in spirit live and walk.

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.

Our text for this day begins with the apostle saying: **“If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march.”** This is more than merely walking. This is not directed to individuals but to those who are in line with one another, marching together as one along the exact same path. In fact, when people are marching, they are going at the same pace, with the same stride so that they actually step in the same steps. There is no deviation or variance. Moreover, they are marching together according to the same voice.

This is the very point. If we live in spirit, we are being led in spirit. If we live in spirit, we do not yield to the temptations of the flesh. The flesh looks to the left and to the right and behind and ahead, seeking selfishly only what seems best to itself. If we walk in flesh, we walk individualistically, seeking our own way through life. If we walk in spirit, we are led by the Spirit of Christ. (Romans 8:9)

If indeed we live in spirit, being led by the Holy Spirit who lives in us, then we must walk together according to this leading of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Lord Jesus explains to the Samaritan woman at the well, saying:

Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth. (John 4:21-24)

If we truly hear what is being taught to us, we will realize that living in spirit and in spirit marching are in fact worshipping in spirit. There can be no separation between life and worship. The two are actually one and the same. How we march through life in this world is how we worship and how we worship is how we march through life in the world.

Somehow, those professing to be believers often imagine that worship is a separate action from their daily living. Moreover, many imagine that worship can be reduced to specific times and places and rituals. But in Baptism God gives His Holy Spirit as a permanent gift. He dwells within us, continually leading us back to the doctrine of the Scriptures which teach us of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Holy Spirit continually urges us back to the gathering of the saints to receive the blessings of God’s Holy Communion. Everything in the life of the true believer depends upon this. For the true believer looks to God for everything. This is the very nature of the faith that He works in us.

II. NEVER SHOULD WE BECOME VAIN-GLORIOUS

This life in spirit in which we march has clear direction and purpose. Those who live in spirit also in spirit march together in their worship. Their worship does not become vain-glorious.

Sadly, such worship is rarely found. It seems that the fleshly desire for vain-glorious worship is what prevails among those who gather to worship God. Why is this? It is because they are not truly living or marching in spirit, and therefore have no true understanding of the life of worship to which they have been called. Thus they turn to vain or empty glory rather than true worship in spirit.

Our King James translation says: **“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”** This is not a bad translation of this text. But St. Paul actually says it more strongly, saying:

If we live in spirit in spirit also we should march. Never should we become vain-glorious—one another provoking, one another envying!

Becoming vain-glorious is something bigger than merely being desirous of vain glory. They are however very close and the end result is the same. However, becoming vain-glorious expresses the fullness to which this overtakes a person, or worse, as St. Paul states it, the congregation. For he does not merely warn individuals not to become vain-glorious, but the congregation. If merely a few individuals become vain-glorious, they can be easily addressed as such and corrected in their error. But if the entire congregation becomes vain-glorious, anyone attempting to call attention to this will be shouted down and even driven out of the congregation.

This is very serious, far more serious than we are inclined to acknowledge. It transforms the worship life of the congregation from true worship to a false worship that leads people astray.

We very much need to understand what true worship in spirit is. It is exactly the opposite of what we imagine it to be apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit. Unless the Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of worshiping in spirit and truth, we simply do not get it and we go about worship according to our own false assumptions.

False worship is vain-glorious, that is, it is pervaded by empty glory. Why is the glory of such worship empty glory? It is empty glory because it disguises itself as giving glory to God, but really glorifies self. Empty glory emphasizes the actions of the worshiper. It stresses emotional response. It promotes exciting and titillating music and outbursts of individuals. It often also includes waving of hands and even so-called liturgical dance. The emphasis is on how much the worshipers love God and how exuberantly they make noises of praise. It is ultimately self serving.

St. Paul calls this “one another provoking, one another envying.” It leads to provoking one another to attempt to outdo the other. It leads to envying one another regarding the quality of one’s voice or the power of one’s exuberance or the impressiveness of one’s prayers or the display of one’s devotion. But of this manner of congregating into the name of the LORD, Jesus says that the person does not go down to his house justified. (Luke 18:14)

This is the problem from which St. Paul warns us to flee. Living in spirit and in spirit marching is not vain-glorious. It does not focus upon us and what we do. Rather, it focuses entirely upon God and what He is doing for us. This living in spirit is a life that is received from God, not a life that we produce for ourselves. It is what God works in us through His gifts, through His means of grace. True worship is not on us and our praises, for we are empty of any genuine glory. All of our attempts at glory fail miserably. All of our attempts at goodness fall short. All of our attempts at praise to God become misdirected and come back to praise of ourselves and our works, works from which we need to be saved. Our works are all corrupt and empty of worthiness of praise and glory. We need to be turned from our works to what God does through the means of grace. Then we truly respond as the Holy Spirit leads us so that we respond in humility, coming to God where He makes His glory fully known to us, in His body and blood given and shed for us. Then our thanksgiving is full of God's glory so that we gladly receive His blessings and the life that to which He has called us. Then our worship is simply receiving the life that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, the life that He purchased for us and for which He purchased us. Then Christ is our glory and our cause for boasting. Then, like John the Baptizer, we speak of decreasing that Christ may increase. Then our glory is full and complete because Jesus is our glory and His righteousness is our joy.

III. BROTHERS, IF EVER ALSO SHOULD BE FORETAKEN A MAN IN SOME SIDE-FALLING

When the congregation is living in spirit so that the members are in spirit marching, they stand together as brothers. This is how St. Paul addresses us.

Brothers, if ever also should be foretaken a man in some side-falling/alighting/landing, . . .

As brothers, first of our Lord Jesus, and secondly of one another, we look after one another in love and concern, noticing when someone presumptuously rushes ahead in one's own opinions, which lead to vain-gloriousness. Such jumping out of line to rush ahead, St. Paul calls side-falling or side-landing. It is like when a mother duck leads her little ducklings, marching them along a safe path. If one of her little ducklings side-steps and gets out of line, she quickly scolds her baby and brings it into line again. Perhaps one of the other little ducklings will peep loudly, calling attention to the one that has side-stepped and fallen out of line.

St. Paul uses this imagery in his explanation of the life of the Church. The Church is unified in the oneness of God. The Church confesses the same doctrine. The Church abides in the same practice or use of the means of grace. The Church's life is a life of worship, of abiding in the glory of God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. His grace is our life. His salvation is our continual desire. His forgiveness is our restoration. His Word is our comfort.

When those who are truly living in spirit and in spirit marching notice one of their brethren side-falling, they immediately seek to restore their side-fallen brother. This is done from the motivation of the love that God has generated in them. Therefore it is done in a spirit of meekness. It is done not to condemn or judge, but to restore. Naturally the judgment must be made that their brother has side-fallen. It is not possible to restore one without pronouncing the judgment of the error. Moreover, this error cannot be treated as small, for it is outside of the way of the Lord and His salvation. Such a person has stepped outside of God's Holy Communion and must be confronted so as to bring that person back into the way of life in spirit. This judgment is made just as soon as it is noticed so that it can be corrected before it becomes the way of the person who has sidestepped. When it is done quickly it can still be done in a

spirit of meekness. When it is done quickly it is done before the side-fallen person's heart becomes hardened.

This St. Paul calls bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ. And what is Christ's law? It is the law of love. It is the law of restoration. This is Christ's law or command or way. This is His good and gracious will.

CONCLUSION

At the end of today's Gospel reading the Lord Jesus says: **"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."** This is exactly the opposite way from the way that our fleshly nature wants to go. We want to seek to be righteous ourselves. But the Lord Jesus reminds us that we need to keep our focus upon the source of righteousness. It is through restoration to God's kingdom that His righteousness is made to be ours so that we live in spirit and in spirit march. Through Baptism God restores us to His kingdom wherein He continually pours out His righteousness for us to enjoy in His Holy Communion. He justifies us, that is, He declares His righteousness, the righteousness of God in Christ, to be ours. He sanctifies us, that is, He separates us from the wickedness of the world and joins us to Himself in the holiness of His body. In His body He feeds us the bread of life and the blood of forgiveness and restoration. This is the way in which we are filled up with His glory so that we humbly praise Him within His Holy Communion. As He continually pours out His life and blessings to us, we humbly gather to partake of His gifts together, and we are filled with His glory so that we respond in thanksgiving. This is the way into which He has called us. This is the way in which He leads us to march together, to His glory and our everlasting blessing. 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.