

Judica - First Sunday of the Passion – the Fifth Sunday in Lent

Hymns: 40, 390, 307, 391

(omit Gloria, responses before & after the Gospel reading, and other ascriptions of praise during Lent.)

The INTROIT

(Ps. 43:1-3)

P: Judge me, O God

C: and plead my cause against an ungodly nation.

P: Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man

C: for Thou art the God of my strength.

P: Oh, send out Thy light and Thy truth;

C: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill.

(The “Gloria in Excelsis” is omitted during the Penitential Season of Lent)

The COLLECT

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; 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

Genesis 12:1-3 (NKJV)

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.143:9,10; 18:48; 129:1-2)

P: Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies; teach me to do Thy will.

C: He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me; Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

P: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.

C: May Israel now say; many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Yet they have not prevailed against me.

The EPISTLE

Hebrews 9:11-15 (NKJV)

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those

who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Philippians 2:8)

P: Christ has humbled himself, and become obedient unto death:

C: even the death of the cross.

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. John 8:46-59 (NKJV)

“Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’ Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Genesis 12:1-3 — “Go”

INTRODUCTION

I. Go

II. TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL CAUSE YOU TO SEE

III. I WILL . . .

CONCLUSION

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Genesis 12:1-3 — “Go”

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

The appointed reading of the Old Testament for this Sunday of Judica is Genesis 12:1-3:

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

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

INTRODUCTION

Today is Judica, the First Sunday of the Passion of our Lord Jesus. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, when we follow our Lord Jesus to Jerusalem where He begins His suffering on our behalf and then brings to fulfillment the ministry of the cross. This journey began in the Garden of Eden with the promise of the Seed of the Woman. In today’s text we hear this promise renewed with the call to Abram to follow the LORD to the land of the Promised Seed, the land which the LORD promised to cause Abram to see. To this land of the Promised Seed the LORD called Abram to follow Him. This is the land of blessing, the land to which we come even today, preaching the cross of Christ, the preaching through which are blessed.

I. Go

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, . . .”

What a wonderful way Moses records this for us. **“Now the LORD had said to Abram.”** He does not write **“Now the LORD said to Abram,”** but **“Now the LORD had said to Abram.”** This is the way of walking in the name of the LORD. A person walks in accordance to what the LORD has decreed. What the LORD decrees does not change. His Word is eternal. His Word is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. What the LORD had said to Abram, remained the same decree throughout all the days of Abram’s life and was the inheritance of all who received this decree through Abram.

This is the same decree as the LORD speaks to us today. It is the Word that the LORD speaks to us in our baptism. When we are baptized the LORD seals us with His own holy name, the name of salvation, the name of everlasting sonship in His household of faith. And so even as Abram heard, we hear from Moses and from the eternal Word made flesh, **“The LORD has said to you.”**

And what has the LORD said? **“Go.”** The actual word is *halak*. It means walk or come or go. I find it curious that our translations always choose to use *Go* in this text when *Come* is really what is meant. I suppose this is the way that we always hear the LORD according to our own reason and strength. We hear the LORD say **“Go”** when He is really saying **“Come.”**

Perhaps the reason that we are so inclined to turn the LORD’s call into a commandment is the fact that His call separates us from the things that we love. We hear the LORD commanding us to leave what we love, when in fact, He is calling us to follow Him. The effect appears to be the same, but the motive is very different. Whereas we imagine that the LORD is ordering us to leave our worldly possessions and our worldly loves, in reality, He is calling us to trust Him as the one in whom all our needs are fulfilled. If our country and family and our father’s house refuse to come with us, who is it that really is making the departure?

This is reflective of the fateful events in the Garden of Eden. It was not the LORD who departed from Adam and Woman. They departed from the LORD and it was the LORD who came to them calling them back to the life that He had created them to live. They had chosen the way of death and He came to them calling them back to life again.

This is what Moses records regarding Abram. This is what the Scriptures declare concerning us as well. The LORD does not call us to leave our family and friends. Rather, He calls the entire world to follow Him and to walk with Him in the way of everlasting blessedness. Yes, this is a different way than the way that we choose for ourselves. Yes, this is a different way than the way of the world. Yes, this often means walking in the Way of the LORD even when our family and friends and countrymen choose to stay behind. But they stay behind by their own choice. They are the ones who reject to come when the LORD calls, thereby separating themselves from us.

II. TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL CAUSE YOU TO SEE

When the world and loved ones dig in their heels, the LORD has said, **“Come, come out from your land and from your kindred and from your father’s house, to the land which I will cause you to see.”**

How often do we pray, **“O Lord, show me the way that I should go”**? How foolish and blind we are we do not even realize. We fall to our knees and pray and pray and pray, calling upon the Lord to show us the way when He has already told us the way. We pray, **“O Lord, what should I do?”** when in our hearts we already know what the Lord has told us.

The way of the LORD is not hidden. He has declared it from the very beginning. Just to be certain that no misunderstanding can remain He declares, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** (John 14:6) He also says, **“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.”** (John 15:16) Again He says, **“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”** (John 14:23-24)

The way of the LORD has already been established. It has been declared from eternity. It was declared to the serpent in the presence of the Man and the Woman. It was declared to Noah and his family. It was declared to Abram and again to Abraham, then to Isaac, Jacob, the patriarchs, to Moses and Joshua, to David, and now to us. In these days after the Word has been

incarnated and has fulfilled all things for us, now we walk by the Spirit who is poured out to us abundantly through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

“Come!” the LORD has said. He has prepared the way in His own body, into which He has called us. He has joined us as members of His body to receive the way of life. **“Come, walk with Me to the place that I will cause you to see.”**

This, too, we twist in our own hearts and minds. We imagine that we must cause ourselves to see. But the LORD promises, **“I will cause you to see.”** How does He accomplish this for us? Does He work this through our ardent devotions and prayers? Or do our devotions and prayers flow from His causing us to see?

It is true that we can work to devote ourselves to prayer and acts of worship and praise and to attempts at drawing near unto God. Yet the harder we pray the less that we hear, at least according to our own attempts at prayer. We need to hear what God has already told us before we even begin to pray. We need to hear what God has done for us before we even begin to ask what we should do. We need to hear what God has taken for us before we even begin to volunteer to take up any work for the LORD. If we hear Him through what He has already told us, we will hear and we will see what He has promised to cause us to hear and to see. Then, rather than continuing to pray and to pray and to pray, **“O Lord, show me the way,”** rather, we will hear what He has already declared and respond with hearts full of the faith that He works in us and say, **“Amen!”**

III. I WILL . . .

Come, come out from your land and from your kindred and from your father's house, to the land which I will cause you to see.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

This is the way of the LORD. He promises what He will do for His servants, His beloved sons. He does not demand that we do great things for Him. Rather, He promises to do great things for us. He has prepared the place for us, even as He has said,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (John 14:1-4)

Yes, we know the way because the LORD has told us. He has made us to see the way by giving Himself for us and to us as the way of life. He has called us and commanded that we be brought to Him in Baptism, where He claims us as His own and seals us with His Holy Spirit. To the world and especially to the devil He marks us with His own righteousness and His Holy Spirit so that we are known by all as His own beloved children. When we find that the way grows dark and blurry, we hear again His promise that He will cause us to see the way. Thus with Luther and all the saints we can cry out when we begin to lose our confidence in the way, **“But I've been baptized!”**

This is why we begin the service first with the invocation and then with the confession and absolution. Before we even dare to ask for forgiveness, first we call upon the Name of the LORD by which we know that this forgiveness is ours. Before we ask, we remember that it is the LORD who causes us to see the way. Before we confess our sins, we remember His command that we come to Him and receive His absolution. It is His promise that He has already told us in our Baptism that draws us in confidence to hear His promise again and again. This is the way that He has declared. This is the way that He causes us to see. He has promised that He will make of us a great nation. He has promised that He will bless us and make our name great so that those who hear of the LORD through us will bless us and receive God's blessing through us.

This is the great proclamation that we repeat every time that we consecrate the bread and the wine and partake of the body and blood of the LORD. We gather into His Holy Communion and we are blessed and as others stand looking from the outside many desire to receive this blessing and hear the LORD call to them along with us, **"Come."**

Yes! This is the LORD's doing, just as He has promised.

CONCLUSION

**Come, come out from your land and from your kindred and from your father's house, to the land which I will cause you to see.
I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

The LORD calls us to come out from that which blinds us to the way that He has prepared for us. It is not really that the LORD is calling us to let go, but rather, to see that certain things have taken hold of us and have blinded us to the truth. When in the garden His children tried to fix things for themselves by hiding and by trying to cover up with makeshift clothing, the LORD called them out of their hiding to stand in the light of His mercy, taking their fig leaves from them and covering them with skins not their own. The LORD slew animals and made new skins to cover His children until the Son of God should be born of the woman to be slain as the Lamb by whom we all would be covered with righteousness again.

For now, we still have trouble seeing what God has accomplished through the cross of Christ. Thus He gives us signs of what He has done and is doing for us. He gives us water by which we are made to see what He has already declared. He gives us bread and wine by which we are made to see that we are indeed forgiven and incorporated into His body of everlasting life. As we eat His body and drink His blood with the bread and the wine we commune with Him in the way that we are to walk all of our days. As we commune with Him through these means, we are renewed in the faith by which we hear and we see who we are by His merciful decree. Then we are free to call upon His name and to pray, praise and give thanks continually. Then we are free to see ourselves as brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus and of one another. Then we are free to walk in the way of life, even when others refuse to walk with us. Then we are free to know that whatever we do in this world, as we do it in the name of the LORD, it is according to God's will. In this the LORD causes us to see that we truly are blessed and that we have been made to be a blessing in Him. 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.