

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

Hymns: 40, 390, 307, 158

(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

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth 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

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the

new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of 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

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Hebrews 9:11-15 —

“And for this Cause He Is the Mediator of the New Testament”

INTRODUCTION

I. AN HIGH PRIEST OF GOOD THINGS TO COME

II. HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

III. AND FOR THIS CAUSE HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONCLUSION

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Hebrews 9:11-15 —

“And for this Cause He Is the Mediator of the New Testament”

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

The appointed Epistle reading for the First Sunday of the Passion is Hebrews 9:11-15:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

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

INTRODUCTION

In today's Introit we pray Judica! Judge me, O God! Plead my cause against an ungodly nation! This is the prayer of the saints. This is the prayer that we pray in connection with Jesus, our High Priest, who took our judgment for us in order that we might be judged with the judgment of righteousness that belongs to Him. He is the mediator of the New Testament in His blood, which we gather to receive in His name that we might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

I. AN HIGH PRIEST OF GOOD THINGS TO COME

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Here is the basis of all of our prayers, all of our hopes. Christ is come as our high priest of good things to come. Jesus Christ is our hope. He is our confidence. He is our future.

Sadly, we are inclined to cling to the things of the past and to place our hopes in the things of the present age. We trust in the mammon, the material things of this age. When we see these things crumble we lose hope. When our fortunes are taken from us we panic. **“Oh, what will we do? How will we survive?”** we cry!

Then we turn to God and pray. We beg Him to protect our livelihoods. We pray that He give us good health. We pray for healing for our bodies. We pray for peace in our families. We cry out in despair when these things are not evident in our lives. We see our church bodies turn to the same things. Big church buildings and parking lots and fancy big screens are touted as the ways of growing the Church and winning souls. The preaching is directed to how to become better and happier people with defined purpose in our lives. The music and worship are contemporized to make them “more effective.” Pastors learn about being counselors and direct people to marriage counselors and psychiatrists and support groups.

But Christ is come an High Priest of Good things to come. He is not come as an high priest for the here and now. He is not come as an high priest of material possessions and happiness that is measured in worldly accountings. Christ is come an high priest of good things to come.

True enough, Christ is come. He is here for us in the present. The peace and hope and joy that He is come to grant to us is true peace and hope and joy that are experienced now in our present circumstances. But His peace and hope and joy are based in the good things that are yet to come. The peace and hope and joy that He gives are based upon the inheritance that we shall receive in the new age that is established in the day of judgment and resurrection.

That great day of judgment is both now and not yet. For Christ is come as our high priest who has entered the holy of holies for us. He has taken our judgment for us in His own body on the cross. He has suffered our judgment in order to acquire for us the judgment of righteousness and holiness that are made to be ours through the faith that is poured out to us through Baptism.

Yet while this judgment of righteousness and holiness is pronounced upon us now, it will not be realized fully until the day of Christ’s return to finalize the judgment upon all the world. The dead shall be raised so that those who are in Christ may be everlastingly separated from those who have persecuted Christ and have rejected His righteous judgment. Then we shall fully realize what we have now only through faith. Then we shall see and experience it evermore. Then we shall see the final undoing of all evil. Then we shall be separated from the knowledge of good and evil that the tempter tricked mankind into choosing so that all that we know once again is good. Then every tear shall be wiped away and sorrow shall never again be experienced by any who are judged as being in Christ Jesus. This it the good to come that our high priest is come to grant us so that we presently live in hope.

II. HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Here we are presented with a simultaneous comparison and contrast between that which was and that which now is. Both are in connection with the passion of Christ Jesus. For the Old Testament was based upon the promise of the New Testament. The Old Testament was ratified with the sacrifice and shedding of blood of animals. The New Testament is ratified with the sacrifice and blood of God. The Old Testament was to keep the saints through the sacrifice of animals in the promise of the fulfillment of all sacrifice through the suffering and death of God. The Old Testament was the promise that through the body and blood of animals that the saints

would be kept in the promise of the ultimate offering of the body and blood of God that would be given in the New Testament.

According to the Old Testament, blood had to be shed and sprinkled upon everything that was to be sanctified from sin. Also according to the Old Testament, everyone had to be purified from the uncleanness of death through Baptism by water that had the ashes of the red heifer mixed into it. Thus as St. John records in 1 John 5, Jesus is come by both water and blood. This was true for the saints of the Old Testament and is true for us today as saints of the New Testament. Jesus came to them through Baptism and the Passover even as He comes to us through Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Christ is the fulfillment of the Old and the institution of the New. For Christ partook of all of the Old Testament for us and then instituted the New Testament on the night of His betrayal.

All of this Christ did through the eternal Spirit. Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost to be born of the Virgin Mary. Christ was testified to by the Holy Spirit at His baptism by John. He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil on our behalf. Finally, through the Holy Spirit He offered Himself as the spotless Lamb who takes the sin of the world, crying out in our place with the burden of our sin and condemnation placed upon Him in His body. He cried out through the Holy Spirit, **“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”**

Yes, all of this was done through the eternal Spirit of God. On the cross the Holy Trinity redeemed us. Jesus, the Christ, offered Himself to God through the Holy Spirit. While the Son alone suffered and died in the flesh for us, nevertheless, the Father and the Spirit were in communion with the Son who offered Himself according to the will of the Father through the eternal Spirit. Christ, God's anointed one, the union of God and Man in the flesh, was made to be Sin for us. Though the Father and the Spirit were with Jesus in the crucifixion, Jesus took our Sin so completely that he experienced the fullness of our Sin in His own person. Thus, like us, though God never abandons anyone, on account of our Sin, Christ could not perceive God's merciful presence and love. Instead, in OUR stead, he cried out according to the blindness of our sin, **“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** (Matt 27:46)

Now, because He offered up His body and poured out His blood, now we are baptized into His body and we eat of His body into the communion of the new life in Him and we drink the new life of forgiveness that He poured out for us in His blood. Never again, because of the communion of these means of grace, shall we ever have cause to cry out in the despair of the darkness of sin and death as though we had been abandoned by God. Rather, we live in the everlasting promise that we have been purged in our consciences from dead works to serve the living God, who is risen from the dead and reigns to all eternity.

III. AND FOR THIS CAUSE HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Truly, it is for this cause that Christ came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. He is the mediator of the New Testament. By His death He has

redeemed us from our transgressions. Under the first testament the saints were kept in this promise until Christ should fulfill the redemption of their transgressions. Now the promise has been fulfilled. The eternal inheritance has been purchased for us and put on lay away until the day of the final judgment. Those who have gone before rejoice in this fulfilment even as we rejoice today in the New Testament that Christ has mediated to us. For our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do into the remembrance of Me." In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it all of you; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as oft as you drink of it, into the remembrance of Me."

And so we have the inheritance before us. Christ Jesus, God in the flesh, has died for us and has given the New Testament in His blood. He has risen from the dead so that this inheritance is made to be everlasting and not just for this life. The blood of the Testament is never ending. It is made available to us as often as we desire to drink of it. Never again will we be without the comfort of God's presence with us.

Moreover, this is ours entirely by the mediation of Christ, our God and Savior. He is our high priest who entered once and for all into the holy place for us. He gave His body into death and was buried on our behalf. The word for *remembrance* is the same word as for sepulcher or tomb. What Jesus declares in the mediation of the New Testament in His blood is that even as we have been buried with Christ through Baptism, in connection with our baptism we are free to partake of His body and blood as often as we desire it. And as we remember our baptism, as we confess our sins before God and hear His holy absolution, what else shall we desire but to commune with God in the meal of salvation? Surely as the Lord Jesus has mediated the New Testament to us we shall desire to partake of it as often as is possible. After all, this is the meal of our inheritance. This is the feast of the blessed Eucharist in God's Holy Communion. This is the New Testament which Christ has mediated for us.

CONCLUSION

Truly it is for this cause that He is the mediator of the New Testament! Christ is our High Priest of the good things to come, the good things of which we are made partakers through faith. No wonder this is called the cup of Thanksgiving as well as the cup of salvation. No wonder this is counted as the basis of true repentance and true worship in both the Old and the New Testament! With the saints of old we continue to say in the words of Psalm 116:

What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

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.