

The First Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 243, 381, 238, 262

The INTROIT

(Ps. 13:5,6,1)

- P:* O Lord, I have trusted in Thy mercy;
C: my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.
P: I will sing unto the Lord;
C: because He hath dealt bountifully with me.
P: How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?
C: How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?

The COLLECT

O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed; 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

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.41:4,1; 5:1)

- P:* Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who beholdest the deep:
C: and who dwellest between the cherubim.
P: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven:
C: and greatly to be praised forever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
P: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers:
C: and greatly to be praised and glorified forever. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 John 4:16-21

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

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. Luke 16:19-31

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 — “Caused to Understand and Knows the LORD”

INTRODUCTION

I. IN THIS LET PRAISE THE PRAISING ONE

II. CAUSED TO UNDERSTAND AND KNOWS THE LORD

III. THAT I EXERCISE LOVINGKINDNESS, JUDGMENT, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, IN THE EARTH

CONCLUSION

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Jeremiah 9:23-24 — “Caused to Understand and Knows the LORD”

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

The Old Testament reading appointed for the First Sunday after Trinity is Jeremiah 9:23-24:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

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

INTRODUCTION

Is it possible for people truly to understand the things of importance? Is it really possible to understand the things of everlasting life? Is it really possible to have true understanding regarding the articles of faith and of the Church and of God? Is it really possible to know God? These are the questions that are answered in our text for this day.

I. IN THIS LET PRAISE THE PRAISING ONE

More and more it seems that people of the current age preach a Gospel of a nebulous nature. While such misty definitions have existed from the day of the first temptation, still it seems that vague definitions of faith are exalted more today than ever before. It seems that more and more the prevailing understanding is one of limited understanding. It seems that more and more the articles of faith are reduced to what people fallaciously label as *the basics of faith* and *enough of the Gospel* and *the essentials of faith* and *just believing in Jesus*.

It seems that more and more what is praised within Christendom is very much what is praised in the world. It seems that more and more *faith* is praised and *The Faith* is diminished and in some cases *The Faith* is even demonized.

To this Jeremiah was commanded to speak the LORD's response:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

The word for *glory* is *halal*. This is the same word from which we have *Hallelujah*, or *Praise ye the LORD*.

What things do we hear praised today? In what things do people glory or boast today? Even in the churches, what things are the basis of people's thinking and confidence and lives? Our text is given to us to call to our attention the distinction between the praise that belongs to the saints and the praises that we sinful humans choose to embrace and exalt. What things do we choose to have exalted? In what things do we exult?

The LORD warns us against these things. Our own wisdom is the first in the list. Second is our own might. Third is our riches. These are presented in the actual order of our priorities. These are presented in the order in which our idolatry moves us.

Our first idolatrous response is to imagine that wisdom is produced in us by our own efforts, that wisdom is our possession and that we are wise on our own. Thus, even as little babies we resist our parents and other caregivers. Even as little babies, even before we begin showing the evidence of active reasoning, we already act with the insolence of our sinful nature. We already act as though we know what we need. And so we fuss and we resist the actions of those who are over us. As we grow older, we grow more deluded in our perceptions of our own reason. We become more convinced that we can trust our own wisdom and we even seek to press our opinions onto others. We resist being corrected, even when proven wrong. We also make assumptions about certain others, so that according to our wisdom we count their presumptions as wisdom that is infallible. These are those who promote human reason as the supreme determiner of wisdom and good. Thus we praise those who exalt our human capabilities.

This brings us to the second idolatrous response. We are more prone to this form of idolatry when we are young and healthy than when we begin to lose our vigor. But even as older people we still praise our strength. Even when our health fails and our abilities falter, still we praise the strength of our collective strength, through our voting and our complaining and our spending. But this we subject to our reason, imagining that our wisdom must prevail over our strength.

Finally, we also idolize our riches. We imagine that money and possessions are evidence that we have been wise and that we have utilized our strength well. We imagine that our riches keep us safe and provide for us. Thus we put our efforts into applying our wisdom and utilizing our strength in ways to maximize and maintain our riches. We praise our riches and what we can accomplish through them.

This evil trinity we praise as our god. Even in the churches this evil trinity rules mightily. When a congregation begins to lose membership and things become tough, what things become the main focus? The treasurer and the stewardship committee begin to present the need for more giving and programs are instituted to help people determine more appropriate and godly pledges. Evangelism sermons and programs become prominent in the life of the congregation. The order of worship is modified. The hymns are chosen to help make people more excited. Hymns and liturgy may be replaced with more appealing songs and music. Sermons and Bible studies begin to focus more and more upon life objectives and less and less upon the means of grace.

But the LORD calls us to live in very different praise.

II. CAUSED TO UNDERSTAND AND KNOWS THE LORD

The LORD declares:

In this let praise the praising one, that he is caused to understand and knows the LORD.

In this statement the LORD completely reverses our thinking. First He admonishes: **“Let not praise the wise in his wisdom, and let not praise the strong in his strength, nor let praise the rich in his riches.”** Notice that the ones spoken of are not identified as praising ones. This is a powerful omission. By this the LORD makes it clear that this is not praise at all. It has a false source and thus the result is also false. This is not true praise. The source of this praise is entirely backwards.

Then the LORD declares: **“But in this let praise the praising one, that he is caused to understand and knows the LORD.”** Here true praise and worship is identified. Here the individual is acknowledged as *the praising one*.” Such a person does not count himself as a wise one or as a strong one or as a rich one. Rather, such a person counts himself as a praising one. That is because the source and object of His praise is from outside himself. His faith is from outside himself. Such a person has been changed in his heart and mind so that he counts what is from himself as nothing, and relies upon the LORD for all things. The praising one praises the wisdom and strength and riches that the LORD gives through His means of grace. Therefore, the praising one counts himself as without wisdom so that he looks to the LORD as His wisdom. The praising one counts himself as weak so that he looks to the LORD as His strength. The praising one counts himself as poor so that he looks to the LORD as His provider.

Such a person lives by faith. Such a person truly understands, for he has been caused to understand. His wisdom and understanding are worked in him by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. His strength is the sufficiency of Christ, supplied in the means of grace. His riches are the gifts of God in Christ, supplied freely through the means of grace. This praising one’s praise is regarding the understanding that the LORD gives to him so that he truly knows the LORD his God. Such a one is filled with the peace of God that surpasses all understanding so that he is guarded and kept in Christ Jesus. Such a person has not sought understanding according to his own strength and riches, but rather he has been caused to understand so that he truly knows the LORD.

III. THAT I EXERCISE LOVINGKINDNESS, JUDGMENT, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, IN THE EARTH

The LORD calls this person the praising one because this person has been caused to understand so as to know the LORD, to know **“the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.”** This is wisdom that a person cannot learn for himself. A sinful human being is entirely incapable of knowing the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. By one’s own reason and strength a person can only know what is manifest in the world. A person can learn that the world is the creation of a supreme being, but nature does not make this creator’s identity known. A person can seek for justice, but will only learn of vengeance and never-ending injustice. All of mankind’s attempts at justice fail. And a person can acquire worldly riches and heap them up beyond reckoning, yet these are temporal and are lost to the person when death consumes him.

But the LORD declares plainly who He is. He has even inspired men to record the Scriptures for us so that we have a testimony unto Him. He also has sent His Son to suffer our sin and the judgment of our sin so that justice has been completely filled up and vengeance has no place for those who receive the righteousness that the LORD supplies. He also has poured out His Holy Spirit to work through the means of grace to cause people to understand and to know

the LORD, so that they know Him as the one who says, **“in these things I delight.”**

What a contrast! The LORD does not delight in wisdom and strength and riches. He does not demand of us that we acquire wisdom and understanding before coming to Him to be received by Him. He does not demand that we become strong so as to fight for Him and to defend His kingdom and His truth. He does not demand that we bring sacrifices to Him to win His favor. Rather, He demands exactly the opposite. He demands that we recognize our complete lack of wisdom and understanding so that He may fill us with the wisdom from above that He pours out to us in Baptism with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then, we learn that He has caused us to understand our true nature and our true needs, so that we look to Him to keep us in His grace, mercy, and peace and to build us up into the full knowledge of Christ. Likewise He demands that we acknowledge that whatever strength we have is from above, so that we do not try to be strong but rather that we trust Him to empower us with His strength. Then we do not worry about what we can and cannot do, but rather we trust that He works all things for good to those who love Him, the called according to His purpose. Likewise He demands that we not presume to acquire riches for ourselves and that we not try to build up riches for His kingdom. He demands that we rather take life for granted, that is, as His gift. Then we truly understand how precious life is and we turn to Him and pray, praise, and give thanks in all things, knowing Him as the LORD, our God who delights in exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness on behalf of His beloved. And this is the key to all true wisdom, strength, and riches, to know the LORD as our loving God who delights in these things. Then we are changed in our very being so that we are regenerated as the praising ones.

CONCLUSION

Is this not a wonderful reversal that the LORD works for us and declares plainly to us? Is it not wonderful to hear that The Faith is not nebulous and that it is plainly declared for our forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life? Is it not wonderful to hear that in Baptism God causes us to understand so that we truly know Him and come to Him in the faith that the Holy Spirit works in us and in which He guards and keeps us in Christ Jesus? Is it not wonderful to hear that the kingdom of God is open to us by this mighty working of the LORD so that we may freely come to His Table where He grants us the very food of everlasting life and peace and joy? Is this not the basis of praise for the praising ones? Does not this understanding of the true faith and this knowledge of the LORD change us in our very being? Does this not make of us people of a changed nature and of changed hearts, minds, and souls so that we naturally respond in true praise to God? Does this not fill us with desire to come from the waters of Baptism to the Lord's Table to be joined by Him in His Holy Communion? Can anything be more praiseworthy? 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.