

The Fifth Sunday after Easter - Rogate

Hymns: 207, 298, 206, 200

The INTROIT

(Is.48:20, Ps.66:1,2)

P: With the voice of singing declare ye and tell this:
C: utter it even to the end of the earth. Hallelujah!
P: The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob:
C: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
P: Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands;
C: sing forth the honor of His name.

The COLLECT

O God, from whom all good things do come, grant to us, Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be right and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; 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 29:11-14 (NKJV)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

THE GRADUAL

(Lk.24:26; Jn.16:28)

P: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
P: Christ, who hath redeemed us with His blood:
C: is risen and hath appeared unto us. Hallelujah!
P: I came forth from the Father and am come into the world:
C: again, I leave the world and go to the Father. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

James 1:22-27 (NKJV)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(1 Cor. 5:7)

P: Hallelujah! Christ, our Passover:
C: is sacrificed for us. Hallelujah!

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”

Jeremiah 29:11-14 — “I Will Be Found by You, Says the LORD”

INTRODUCTION

- I. FOR I KNOW THE THOUGHTS THAT I THINK TOWARD YOU**
- II. THEN YOU WILL CALL UPON ME AND GO AND PRAY TO ME**
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CONCLUSION

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Jeremiah 29:11-14 — “I Will Be Found by You, Says the LORD”

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

The Old Testament reading from Jeremiah 29:11-14 is the text for our meditation.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

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

INTRODUCTION

In today’s Gospel reading the Lord Jesus says, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”** This is God’s will. These are the thoughts that He thinks toward us. He wants us to know Him as our God. He wants us to trust in Him so that all of our fears are removed from our hearts. He wants us to walk daily in His grace, mercy, and peace. He has redeemed us from the captivity of our sinful nature. He has paid the price for our freedom and He promises that He shall come to us and be with us. Having been baptized into the name of Jesus, we abide in Him and He in us. He has manifested Himself to us so that with all confidence we partake of Him in His presence. This is the declaration of the LORD.

I. FOR I KNOW THE THOUGHTS THAT I THINK TOWARD YOU

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

These words were written by the prophet Jeremiah and sent to **“the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.”** The LORD’s people had forgotten Him and had turned to other gods. They had forgotten His everlasting mercies. They had turned to their own thoughts and relied upon their own wisdom and understanding. They had begun to imagine themselves interpreters of the Gospel rather than hearers of it. They had wandered far from the LORD their God in their hearts and minds. Thus the LORD withdrew His protection from them as a people. He brought the armies of Babylon against them to conquer them and to take them away as captives. By this the people would be caused to see the futility of their own reason and strength. They would be caused to endure the falseness of their own interpretations.

This message is for us today as well. Even though we experience many troubles in our lives, the LORD declares, **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”** Truly, the troubles that the LORD brings into our lives are intended to work good for us. This is why we pray in the General prayer of the Church,

All who are in trouble, want, sickness, anguish of labor, peril of death, or any other adversity, especially those who are in suffering for Thy name’s and for Thy truth’s sake, comfort, O God, with Thy Holy Spirit, that they may receive and acknowledge their afflictions as the manifestation of Thy fatherly will.

This is how the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray. His apostles teach us likewise. This is what we need to hear. All things God works together for good to those who love Him, the called according to His purpose. Yes, in Christ God loves us and does not forget us. In Christ God looks upon us as a loving father looks upon his beloved children. He looks upon us and thinks thoughts that are for our good, even when we have troubles and afflictions.

We experience trouble and we begin to interpret things for ourselves. We begin to interpret these as abandonment or rejection or failure. This is why we need to hear the declaration of the LORD and receive His gracious promise that He is giving us a future and a hope. Then, rather than interpreting things for ourselves, we turn to the Scriptures where we encounter His Word, and to the gathering of the saints to the preaching and Sacraments. There we learn the true will of God concerning us, His good and gracious will toward us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. THEN YOU WILL CALL UPON ME AND GO AND PRAY TO ME

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

When we are made to be aware of the thoughts that the LORD has for us, then we truly are turned in our ways so that we call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. Until the LORD makes His thoughts toward us known to us through the pure administration of the Gospel and the Sacraments, we seek for Him in vain. Truly all the world seeks to find God and His goodness. Even atheists seek after God without knowing what it is that they seek. The entire world seeks to be free. The entire world seeks to find justice for themselves and those whom they count as their friends and brethren. No one wants to be enslaved to evil. All people want to receive the LORD’s goodness, even though very few know the LORD as the One who is good.

This is why the LORD declares to us His good thoughts concerning us. This is why He established His Church on earth for us so that we would hear proclaimed to us His good and gracious will. This is why He commands that we have no other gods, for He alone is able to give us what we need and desire. This is why He commands that we call upon without taking His name in vain. For by His holy name he brings us into the way of life and freedom and peace and fullness of joy. This is why He commands that we remember the Sabbath Day to sanctify it. For if we forget that He is our source of rest and comfort and hope and peace, we will look everywhere else.

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

These words are also properly translated,

And you will call to Me and will walk and will judge toward Me and I will hear toward you. And you will seek me and come when you follow in all your heart.

The promise is that all of this is the LORD's doing. These are the thoughts that He thinks toward us. Everything that He works in our lives is to bring this to fulfillment for us. We have the tendency to imagine that He is telling us that we must somehow seek after Him to find Him. The reality is that He is actively seeking us through everything that He brings to pass in our lives. In every circumstance He is calling out to us to follow Him. He wants us to hear His voice so that we follow Him and find ourselves in His loving presence. When we call out to Him in the way that He has given us and proclaimed to us, then we find that He has indeed come to us and is with us.

III. I WILL BE FOUND BY YOU, SAYS THE LORD

I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

The King James version says, "**And I will be found of you, saith the LORD.**" The Hebrew has a deeper sense to it. It does mean that the LORD declares that He will be found, but the meaning is fuller than that we will find Him on account of seeking Him. It means, "**And I will be present to you, declaration Yahweh.**"

This meaning is further expounded by the following declaration, "**And I will turn you captives and will gather you from all the gentiles and from all the places which I have driven you, declaration Yahweh. And I will turn you to the place which I stripped you from then.**"

For the sake of the Church and for all who would be saved, the LORD stripped them all from the land of promise. He drove them out of the Church so that they would see how far they had wandered from the LORD in their hearts. Once they had been stripped from their idols of their self-made temple and their self-made ways of worship, having seen the emptiness of the ways of the Gentiles whom they had been imitating, once again the people would be enabled to hear the Word of the LORD. He declared it long before they were ready to hear it. He declared it through His prophet, Jeremiah, and they rejected it. Yet the declaration of the LORD stood and in time the people did remember it.

Of course, there were those like Daniel, who had never forgotten the LORD and His promises. Yet they were dragged away with the rest. Nevertheless, they held steadfastly to the Word and the LORD kept them in His grace and peace. Because the declaration of the LORD never departed from them, they never fell from knowing His presence with them even in a foreign land among people of false religions and false gods.

Ultimately, this all points to God's faithfulness. The LORD wants us to concentrate upon His faithfulness rather than striving to be faithful ourselves. For that is the very nature of faith. Faith is not a striving to be faithful. Faith is trusting in the One who is faithful. Faith is the reliance upon the LORD to save us and keep us in His peace. Thus the faithful have always looked beyond their poor circumstances and beyond their own weaknesses and failures and sinfulness, to the promise of the One who declares that He will be present and gather us unto Himself. This is all fulfilled in Jesus, Immanuel. For in Jesus God truly is with us to save us and keep us safe. In Jesus God sets us free from the captivity that we choose for ourselves. In Jesus God turns us from our own thoughts, words, and deeds so that we hear His declaration and behold His mighty works on our behalf. Then we truly are free of our doubts and our fears and our sins and all that would misguide us and keep us from trusting in the LORD.

CONCLUSION

We sinful humans are easily distracted. We turn our hearts toward many directions, and then we wonder why the LORD seems to be so far from us in our lives. Today we have heard again the declaration of the LORD that He is not the one who has done the abandoning. When we turn our hearts and minds we have abandoned the way of the LORD. Thus He causes many trials and troubles to enter our self-chosen paths so that we become aware of our faithlessness and remember His faithfulness. When God brings this to fruition for us, we have been turned back to the way of peace and freedom. Then we seek Him again where He has promised to be present for us, in the pure administration of His Gospel and Sacraments. Then we again have peace in our hearts and lives. Then we again follow His voice and rest in the absolute confidence of His goodness. Then nothing else matters in our lives. Then worries and fears and doubts have no power over us. Then we stand firmly in the peace of Christ and temptations are powerless against us. **“Then I will be found by you, says the LORD.”** It is like waking up in the morning after a peaceful night's sleep to find that life is still with us. For this is exactly what faith is. 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.