

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hymns: 242, 245, 372, 243

The INTROIT

(Ps.25:16,18,1,2)

P: Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me;

C: for I am desolate and afflicted.

P: Look upon mine affliction and my pain;

C: and forgive all my sins.

P: Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;

C: O my God, I trust in Thee, let me not be ashamed.

The COLLECT

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; 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

Micah 7:18-20 (NKJV)

Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

The GRADUAL

(Ps. 55:22,16,18; 18:1,2)

P: Cast thy burden upon the Lord:

C: And He shall sustain thee.

P: I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me:

C: He hath delivered my soul in peace. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: I will love Thee, O Lord, my Strength:

C: The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Peter 5:6-11 (NKJV)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and

the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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. Luke 15:1-10 (NKJV)

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Micah 7:18-20 — “Truth and Mercy”

INTRODUCTION

I. PARDONING INIQUITY AND PASSING OVER THE TRANSGRESSION

II. HE WILL AGAIN HAVE COMPASSION ON US AND SUBDUE OUR INIQUITIES

III. YOU WILL GIVE TRUTH TO JACOB AND MERCY TO ABRAHAM

CONCLUSION

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Micah 7:18-20 — “Truth and Mercy”

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

The Old Testament reading for the Third Sunday after Trinity is Micah 7:18-20:

Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

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

INTRODUCTION

“Who is a God like You?” Truly there is no other God among all the gods of men like the LORD. The LORD initiates the reconciliation and carries it through to the end. His only demand is that those to be saved hold steadfast to the faith that He gives them. His demand is that those who are to be saved trust Him and rely upon Him to be their Savior. When those whom He loves disobey and turn away, He seeks them out and turns their hearts and minds so that they hear His voice and trust Him again. When we turn away in our hearts and minds and bodies, He calls to us again and again. He stands always ready to forgive, to pardon, to restore. None of the gods that are created in the imaginations of men are like this. Moreover, none of the gods conjured up in the minds of men ever actually do anything. Such gods always leave salvation to be worked by the ones who need to be saved. With the LORD, however, salvation is purely His work. Truly, there is no other god like Him.

I. PARDONING INIQUITY AND PASSING OVER THE TRANSGRESSION

Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?

Pardoning iniquity. This pardoning is literally *lifting off*. What god invented by men has ever taken this approach to the guilt of sin? What god has ever promised to lift off iniquity from those who have covered themselves with guilt? Even the gods of worldwide Christendom are gods that demand that the guilty somehow do something to prepare themselves to come to God. Even the Christianity of nearly all Christian churches teaches that a person must make a decision to repent and believe in Christ before the guilt of sin will be lifted off. But the LORD promises that HE lifts off the iniquity. He promises that in the body of Jesus, the Word made flesh, that He takes the sin of the world and carries the iniquity of us all. The LORD promises that we do not have to carry the burden and that we do not have to find a way to rid ourselves of the burden. He comes to us and takes our sin, washing us with the holy water of Baptism, lifting off and carrying away our iniquity and wrapping us in the robe of His righteousness.

AND . . . passing over transgression to the remnant of the inheritance of Him.

First the promise is given that the LORD lifts off iniquity and then the promise continues that the LORD passes over transgression. The rebellious wanderings are passed over and are not counted as having anything to do with the remnant of the LORD's inheritance. **"Passing over transgression to the remnant."** In order to come to the remnant, the LORD passes over their transgressions. If the LORD did not lift off our iniquity for us, if He left it up to us to find our way back to Him, if He merely gave us the Scriptures and waited for us to read them and to decide to repent and return to Him, we would never find our way. No, rather, the LORD passes over our transgressions and come to us. He passes over our decisions and our commitments and our worship and all of our corrupt and wicked ways, and comes to us to restore us to true faith and the true life that is in Christ Jesus.

Amazingly, the LORD is not concerned about numbers. He does not look for large gatherings. Rather, the LORD passes over transgression and comes to the remnant. Do you realize why the Church is always referred to as a remnant? A remnant is a tiny portion that has been torn way from the larger fabric. A remnant is the tiny piece that is left over and is usually cast aside by those who think that size and numbers are what count. The Church has always been that portion of humanity that the world counts as the fragmented rejects.

But the LORD passes over transgression and comes to the remnant. He delights in those whom the world has rejected and cast out. For the very reason that the world rejects them is that they are the remnant of His inheritance. They don't belong to the large gatherings because they belong to the LORD. They are His inheritance. They are His possession. Like little bits of static charged lint, they continue to cling to Christ. And it is in Christ that they are gathered where the LORD has promised to come to them.

II. HE WILL AGAIN HAVE COMPASSION ON US AND SUBDUE OUR INIQUITIES

**He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.
He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities.**

God is our Father. His anger is set before us so that we may realize how badly we have gone astray. He manifests His wrath in many ways, inflicting temporal punishments so as to cause us to recognize what the end result will be if we do not hear His voice and respond in the faith that His Word produces. But for the remnant of His inheritance, His anger does not last. To the remnant, the troubles of this world are only temporal shouts of warning that are intended to get our attention so that we are brought back to the safety of the way that our Father has prepared for us. Thus the LORD does exhibit His anger and we do experience it, but He does not hold on to it forever. Why? Because He delights in mercy. He delights in loving-kindness toward us. He only exhibits His anger so that we will be turned from our transgressions. His true desire is to exhibit His loving-kindness toward us. When we do not transgress into the way of death, we behold the means by which His loving-kindness is administered and we partake of His mercy and goodness and love.

Yes, after He gets our attention again, He does have compassion on us. But we cannot receive His acts of compassion while we are turned away from His means of grace to our own ways. He first has to take hold of us and turn us around. Often He has to break us of our strength so that we fall to our knees and cry out in despair. Then, when we are broken of our self-reliance so that we remember our dependence upon Him for all good things, then He shows us that His true attitude concerning us is one of total compassion. Yes, through this process, He

subdues our iniquities. Once He has broken our self-reliance so that we no longer imagine that we can be holy by our own reason and strength, then He treads our iniquities under His feet. He crushes the head of the serpent so that sin no longer rules over us. He takes all of our sins from us and casts them into the depths of the sea of Christ's suffering and death, covering them over and blotting them out in the depths of the flood of Christ's redeeming blood.

This is why the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to “**do this often into My burial place,**” that is, “**My remembrance.**” Remember the LORD's promise that He will remember our sin no more? This is because in Baptism He lifts our iniquity from us. When we are baptized into Christ Jesus we are baptized into His death and burial. In the death and burial of Christ our sins are no more. Our guilt is no longer counted against us for Jesus' sake. He took our sin and continues to take our sin as we return to the waters of Baptism and confess our sins so as to hear again and again the holy absolution. Then, as we come to partake of the body of our unity in Christ's Holy Communion and drink of the cup of the New Testament in His blood, we do this into His remembrance. And His remembrance is one of perfect holiness. He remembers only that He took our sin and died with it in His body and was buried with it in the place of remembrance. He remembers our sin as crucified and buried. Thus He passes over our transgressions and comes to us with forgiveness and life. His remembrance is that He has risen in His body from the dead in perfect holiness and in His body has ascended again to His throne of glory to rule over us in holiness forevermore. Thus as we eat of His body and drink of His blood, we do so into His remembrance so that what He remembers is applied to us. And what is His memorial or remembrance? He remembers our sin no more. Our sin is no longer remembered as having anything to do with us. This is what we eat and drink as we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

III. YOU WILL GIVE TRUTH TO JACOB AND MERCY TO ABRAHAM

You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

This declaration is full of God's grace. It is rich beyond measure. Yet the riches need to be brought out of this wonderful storehouse so that we may receive them.

Why does the LORD speak of giving truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham? Do you remember who Jacob is? Jacob is the second born son of Isaac. Esau was the firstborn of the twins. When Esau was pushed out into the world, Jacob had hold of Esau's heel. Thus he was named Jacob, or heel grabber. Jacob was the one to whom the promise was given that the LORD would carry out the salvation of the world through his offspring. Yet Jacob and Rebekah did not trust the LORD to work this. Instead they contrived to deceive Isaac. As a result of the lie, Jacob had to flee for his life. He deceived his father and cheated his brother, and then he fled for his life. He fled to his mother's brother and lived under his protection. He fell in love with Rachel and promised to work seven years for her hand in marriage. But his uncle Laban continually lied and kept changing the agreement, including the deception of giving him the oldest daughter, Leah, in marriage instead of Rachel at the end of the seven years. So Jacob's dishonesty came full circle. His dishonesty and lack of faith led him into the clutches of his dishonest uncle. But when Jacob returned home again with his two wives and sons, the LORD had worked a miracle with Esau. First, Jacob repented and submitted to Esau. Secondly Esau forgave his brother and welcomed him in love. Jacob served two terms of seven years, fourteen years, before truth was restored to him. Interestingly, St. Matthew begins his account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with three fourteens. Jesus, the very Truth of God, comes after a trinity of fourteens. Jacob was restored after one fourteen. But Jesus came as the complete fulfillment of the inheritance of the

Holy Trinity, and thus, Matthew emphasizes a trinity of fourteens of generations of the inheritance of the LORD.

Chronologically and genealogically, Abraham preceded Jacob. In Micah's prophecy, the gift of the Truth to Jacob precedes the mercy that was promised to Abraham. This is perfectly in keeping with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. First the Truth, that is, Jesus, had to be given to Jacob, that is, the descendants of Abraham. Then, Jesus, the Truth, made God's mercy that had been promised through Abraham available to all. This is why the Scriptures are adamant about the absolute purity of the Gospel and Sacraments. For when the means of grace are compromised, the Truth is compromised. The Truth can only be received purely, even as Jesus has to be received as the pure, perfect, and holy Son of God. An impure Jesus cannot lift off our iniquities and pass over our transgressions. An impure Word cannot bind us to the saving Truth. But where the Gospel is administered purely, our sins are remembered no more. Where the blood of Christ is administered and received as He has commanded, we receive the absolute assurance of life in His body. Thus, as the Church gathers to the holy and pure Gospel, those who gather as the Church are made to be holy and pure. Through the pure means of grace God gives the Truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham.

CONCLUSION

The consistency and integrity of the Holy Scriptures is truly amazing. From beginning to end they proclaim the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. From beginning to end they testify of God's goodness and of His great and merciful desire to make His goodness ours. He wants us to be true communicants of His grace, mercy, and peace. He has established the holy means of grace by which He restores to us the Truth and keeps us in His mercy. Truly there is no other god like the LORD our God. 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.