

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 20, 383, 276, 384

The INTROIT

(Ps.48:9,10,1)

P: We have thought of Thy loving-kindness, O God;

C: in the midst of Thy Temple.

P: According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth;

C: Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

P: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;

C: in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

The COLLECT

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the Spirit to think and do always such things as are right, that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee; may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; 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 15:19-21

Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I *am* with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.31:2,1; 78:1)

P: Be thou my strong rock:

C: for an house of defense to save me.

P: In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust:

C: let me never be ashamed. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Give ear, O My people, to My Law:

C: incline your ears to the words of My mouth. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

Romans 8:12-17

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

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. Matthew 7:15-23

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Romans 8:12-17 — “Brethren, We Are Debtors; Not to the Flesh”

12. Consequently therefore, brothers, debtors we are, not to the flesh, according to flesh to live.
13. For if according to flesh you-all live, you-all are about to die. But if by spirit the doings of the body you-all put to death, you-all shall live.
14. For as many as by God's Spirit are being led, these God's sons are.
15. For you-all did not receive a spirit of slavery again into fear, but you-all received a spirit of adoption (sonship) in which we cry out, “Abba, Father!”
16. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
17. Now if children, also heirs; heirs on the one hand of God and co-heirs on the other hand of Christ, if indeed, we suffer together with Him in order that also we may be glorified together with Him..

υιοθεσιας ^{5206 N-GSF} = the *placing* as a *son* ; adoption; sonship

INTRODUCTION

- I. BRETHREN, WE ARE DEBTORS; NOT TO THE FLESH
- II. BUT IF BY SPIRIT THE DOINGS OF THE BODY YOU-ALL PUT TO DEATH, YOU-ALL SHALL LIVE
- III. YOU-ALL RECEIVED A SPIRIT OF ADOPTION IN WHICH WE CRY OUT

CONCLUSION

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Romans 8:12-17 — “Brethren, We Are Debtors; Not to the Flesh”

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

The sermon text is the Epistle reading appointed for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity,
Romans 8:12-17:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

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 warns that not everyone who says to Him, “**Lord! Lord!**” shall enter the kingdom of heaven. He gives this warning in connection with the false prophets, who teach people to believe that by their crying out and by their believing in Jesus that they are members of God’s kingdom.

In today’s Epistle reading the Apostle Paul gives the same warning, with additional explanation. This warning is against what is probably the greatest deception among those who gather in the name of Jesus. Thus the Lord Jesus and His apostle give the strongest possible warning against this false worship that leads to everlasting death, while those who worship according to this false doctrine imagine themselves to be living in the safety of the kingdom of heaven. God desires that by spirit we mortify the deeds of the body so that in place of death we shall receive life.

I. BRETHREN, WE ARE DEBTORS; NOT TO THE FLESH

Our text begins with the apostle saying, “**Consequently therefore, brothers, debtors we are, not to the flesh, according to flesh to live.**”

Consequently. This is in accord with what was said previously. This is building upon what St. Paul wrote in the previous verse, saying, “**But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**” This explains what Jesus means in our Gospel reading when He warns, “**Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**”

St. Paul addresses his readers as brothers. How did they become brothers? They were born as brothers, regenerated by the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, the same Spirit of God that now dwells in them. How did they get this Spirit of God? God pours out His Spirit to us in Baptism. Thus we are born again as debtors, only through this blessed sacrament of Baptism, God causes us to be regenerated as debtors of spirit rather than of flesh. No longer are we debtors according to the flesh, to live according to the sinful fleshly nature. Heavens no! For the wages of this manner of living is everlasting death. This is what St. Paul explains in the next verse, saying, **“For if according to flesh you-all live, you-all are about to die.”**

According to what our fleshly nature accounts as living, we cannot do the will of the Father of Jesus. Rather, according to our fleshly birth we do the will of our father, the devil. According to the deeds of our fleshly nature, we are debtors to the devil. According to our fleshly nature we must and always do act as we have inherited from our father, Adam, who betrayed us to the power of the devil and made us slaves of the devil on account of sin.

But here St. Paul calls us to remember what God has done for us in our baptism. Here St. Paul calls us to look not to the old nature of flesh that binds us to the devil so as to depend upon ourselves and our own reason and strength in seeking to find our way in life, but to look to the new nature of spirit that we have been given as newborn brothers of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to this spirit we shall live, as St. Paul goes on to explain.

II. BUT IF BY SPIRIT THE DOINGS OF THE BODY YOU-ALL PUT TO DEATH, YOU-ALL SHALL LIVE

For if according to flesh you-all live, you-all are about to die. But if by spirit the doings of the body you-all put to death, you-all shall live.

Notice the shift from verse 11, where St. Paul spoke of the Spirit of God raising our mortal bodies from the dead just as the body of Jesus also was raised from the dead. Through the faith of Jesus that is given to us in Baptism, we are brought one by one into the kingdom of heaven. But now, having been regenerated into God’s family, we are no longer living as individuals according to flesh. Now the apostle speaks to us as one body. Now our actions are not the actions of individuals, but of one body. Now our thoughts are not many thoughts, but one. No longer do we seek to fulfill our many individual desires, for now we have a singular desire, the desire to live as God directs us.

Thus St. Paul does not speak of us as individuals but as members of one body. He says that if by spirit the doings of the body we put to death, we shall live. What does he mean by “the doings of the body”?

Remember that St. Paul said in verse 11 that the Spirit of God makes our mortal bodies alive again. In the offertory we sing the words of Psalm 51,

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.**

We sing this after hearing the sermon and in connection with what we are about to do together as a congregation. We sing this, beseeching God to keep us from losing what we have just received through the preaching of the Gospel. We sing this as we prepare to approach the

table of God's Holy Communion, so that we will not turn aside to our own attempts at worship and praise and prayer, but rather that we would continue in the unity that the Word creates amongst us. We are begging God to keep us from imagining that we come to the table of unity and forgiveness and life according to our own understanding, but rather, according to His merciful invitation and command in the Gospel. We are praying that God would keep us from imagining that true worship has anything whatsoever to do with what we bring to Him, and that He would keep us from forgetting that worship is His gift to us that He performs in us as those who have been joined into Him in His body.

Thus St. Paul tells us that if by spirit we put to death the doings of the body we will live. We have come from confessing our sins and receiving the absolution promised to us in Baptism. We have heard again the regenerating Word of the Gospel. Now we come to the table that the LORD has prepared for us, furnished with the body and blood of our salvation, so that we may receive together what we cannot obtain for ourselves by anything that we do as a congregation. No prayers can bring us unto the Lord. No choir anthems can draw us into God's presence. No praises can make us worthy of the glory of God's holiness. Only the body of unity into which we are joined through Baptism and the blood of forgiveness which is poured out for us to receive have the power to keep us in the life that is ours by God's grace to us in Christ.

All of our attempts at worship as a congregation must be put to death. These all are an offense to God because they are acts of flesh and are full of the corruption of the death that we inherit according to the flesh. But by spirit we abandon our own efforts to praise God and instead we turn as one body in Christ Jesus to receive the lifeblood that flows to us as those who have been ingrafted into the true Vine. Thus the fruit of the vine is made to be the very lifeblood of God that renews us in the life that is in Him, and we are made to be partakers of His life with Him.

III. YOU-ALL RECEIVED A SPIRIT OF ADOPTION IN WHICH WE CRY OUT

For as many as by God's Spirit are being led, these God's sons are. For you-all did not receive a spirit of slavery again into fear, but you-all received a spirit of adoption (sonship) in which we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if children, also heirs; heirs on the one hand of God and co-heirs on the other hand of Christ, if indeed, we suffer together with Him in order that also we may be glorified together with Him.

Truly when we sing the offertory with David and the saints of old we sing of the mighty works of God and put to death the doings of the body. We sing of what we cannot believe according to our own reason and strength. We sing of what God declares to us through His Word so that we receive what we cannot perceive or understand or acquire for ourselves. We sing not of our faith but of the faith that is worked in us by the power of the Gospel. And so we see that we truly are being led by God's Spirit so that we live according to spirit and not according to flesh. We hear not our witness and testimony, but the witness and testimony of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our testimony to conform to His testimony. Then we know God as our Father and we learn to depend upon Him rather than ourselves. Then we put to death our own notions of worship and praise and prayer, and we begin to pray in spirit as the Holy Spirit leads us, worshiping as recipients rather than givers, praising God with His words rather than our own words, praying His will in place of our wills.

As the Holy Spirit works this among us we find that He truly does make us to be one holy catholic Church, the communion of the saints. For the Holy Spirit as conjoined us with the Word, that is, Jesus, so that we have been made to be sons of God together, heirs of God and coheirs of Christ. This is why suffering is what we observe in this world, for we inherit what God and Christ receive from the world. Hatred and disrespect are what the world shows to God. We are heirs of God and coheirs of Christ, and so we receive from the world what our Lord receives. But from God we receive the inheritance that His suffering won for us. He takes our sin and gives to us His righteousness. He takes from us our sorrow and gives to us His everlasting joy. He takes from us our guilt and gives to us His pure and holy will and conscience. He takes from us our acts of death and gives to us His acts of life.

CONCLUSION

Could God have made things any more simple and effortless for us? Yet we imagine it to be hard and we actually make it hard. We imagine that we must do for ourselves, but God declares that He has already worked it all for us. We imagine that we must bring forth praises and gifts to God, but God declares His praises to us as coheirs of the one worthy of all praise and glory and honor and declares that He gives all good things freely to us. Even the faith that we need so as to believe is God's gift to us and not something that we must make happen for ourselves. God has regenerated us as His children. He has declared it to be so, and thus it is. Therefore He is our Father, who lavishes His love and mercy and limitless blessings upon us. He comes to us and makes Himself known to us as our loving God so that we look up and rejoice in that love that He bestows to us. He leads us to turn aside from our own thoughts, words, and deeds, so as to live in His thoughts, words, and deeds together. Truly this is cause for giving thanks together in His Holy Communion to which we now are called to partake. 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.