

Third Sunday in Easter/April 26, 2020
1 Peter 1:17-26/Purifying Your Soul
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church
Pastor Jerry Stobaugh

“And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

In our text, and the verses preceding it, the Apostle St. Peter calls his hearers to holiness. He is not encouraging us to merely do the best we can. He does not give us some generic Protestant drivel. No, what he gives us is a scriptural admonition to be holy in thought, word, and deed. To be holy is to be set apart by God, set apart to be sinless. God says, “Be holy, for I am holy,” words repeated by St. Peter, words spoken by our Lord throughout the Book of Leviticus. We are to be holy, for our heavenly Father is holy. Peter exhorts us to conduct ourselves throughout the time of our stay here in fear. Peter refers to the time of our stay here, for he knows we are but strangers here, for heaven is our home. Our time is limited here on this earth; our time is a gift from God, a time full of opportunities to receive God's gifts, render Him thanks for all His benefits toward us, and to call upon His Name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Peter begins our text by saying, “And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile”. God judges’ man by his works but only on the basis of whether faith in Christ is present in one’s heart. We believe Christ shall come to be our Judge, and He is an impartial Judge. As Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, [Mark 16:16] “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” We are saved solely on account of God's grace through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ is our one Redeemer, our only Redeemer, contrary to what you may hear on television, radio or social media concerning other “Christian” denominations. Anyone who mislead their followers, taking them from the road to salvation to the back alley of confusion and condemnation, falsely teaching their followers that it’s OK to pray to anyone else but God the Father, through faith of the Holy Spirit for the sake of Jesus. Or that teaches there is salvation outside Christ Life, death and resurrection. Deprives their hearers the good news of the Gospel and only way them down with Law.

Remember, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, sought to return the Church to Holy Scripture and its central truth that man is justified solely by God’s grace through one’s faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works of the Law. We are to do good works to show we already have this faith, not to obtain it. We cannot, on the clear basis of Scripture, believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to Him. This means we may buy into lies about Christianity because we sinners lack for ourselves the certainty of eternal life. We merely hope we will go to heaven. We beat ourselves down with our sins, and the devil convinces us we will never be forgiven unless we do this, that, and the other. This position places the responsibility for man’s salvation upon man, who cannot save himself, and removes the central focus from Jesus, whose Name means “the LORD saves.” We need to be released from this burden of sins, doubt, and false belief, lest we fall from the faith. This is the fear we are to have in the time of our stay here: not the fear of God’s wrath but the fear of falling from His grace and the one true faith, the faith clearly taught in Holy Scripture. We need to be redeemed from our aimless conduct received by tradition from those who pretend to be our fathers.

It gives me great pleasure to announce to you this morning this redemption has taken place. We have been bought from this pattern of aimless conduct, but not with such perishable things such as gold

and silver, but with something of much greater worth and will never perish, the blood of Jesus Christ. To make payment for our sins, it is necessary blood be shed, the blood of a lamb that is without blemish and without spot. For this reason, Jesus, our Good Shepherd and our High Priest, became our sacrificial Lamb. He paid our price with His blood. Judas received 30 pieces of silver, for betraying the Lord, and Judas hanged himself. We receive the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and we receive the gift of eternal life. We receive the gift of salvation. We receive the gift of the forgiveness of sins. This, fellow redeemed, is how we are made holy: our heavenly Father looks at us who come to Him with repentant hearts, and He sees us through the blood of His only-begotten Son, and He declares us forgiven and righteous for Jesus' sake. Our sins are taken away. We have been made holy, without blemish and without spot, in the precious blood of Jesus.

Our holiness comes in the forgiveness of sins, which is nothing other than living our Baptism. We are to be holy; so, God makes us holy. He set us apart, that we would receive His gifts with thanksgiving. To this end He raised His Son Jesus from the dead, so our faith and our hope are in God alone. God gives us this faith and hope as He gives us His Holy Spirit at our Baptism, who creates in us saving faith in Jesus Christ, the faith He strengthens through the preaching of the Gospel and through Holy Absolution, the same faith He feeds and nourishes through the body and blood of the Lord. By the work of the Holy Spirit, we are holy, made holy through the Word and Sacraments, for in these Means of Grace our risen Lord has attached Himself, to give His gifts to you and for you! This is what it means to purified in your soul and this will sustain you into the new heavens and new earth.