

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost/October 11, 2020  
Isaiah 25:6-9/Faithful Recognition  
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church  
Pastor Jerry Stobaugh

“... let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

One of the most common troubles in our daily lives is failing to recognize the good things we have. We often fail to take notice of these many good things, either taking them for granted or, worse yet, never noticing them to begin with, as if good things are some sort of entitlement, the real trouble and despair arises after they are gone. It's only after we no longer have these wonderful little blessings and treasures in our lives do, we realize what a truly good thing we had...and lost. Hindsight is always 20/20, isn't it? Sometimes this recognition of loss is minimal in scope. It stings a little, but in the grand scheme of things, it's really not that big of deal.

Of course, there is always the more tragic side of this recognition of loss. Many people sob and grieve over the incredible guilt felt for failing to cherish and love the good things and people in their lives, this crushing guilty realization coming only after the loved one is gone, either by divorce or by the permanence of death. “I didn't know what I had until it was all gone.” Many chase after the “finer things” in life, forgetting about the finest things in their lives—the people who love them and care for them. Sometimes you might even catch all those finer things you've been chasing after, but that's also when the ugly reality hits. You have no one to share them with; no one who loves you for you, at least. Someone will always “love” you for what you can do for them, but very few people in this world ever truly love you simply for who you are. When this lonely realization hits, it you. You feel hollow and empty inside. You can't go back and make things right. You don't get a re-do or put in a good word

with God so you can get your lost treasure back. That's not how it works.

As we turn our ears to the Gospel lesson appointed for this morning, we hear our Lord speaking to what we all know so well—the agony of recognizing incredible loss only after the weeping and gnashing of teeth has set in. However, this is not the focus of our meditation for this morning. Besides, all of you here today really don't fit the bill of the fools in the lesson who had the gracious invite into God's heavenly grace and forsook it, only to realize too late the time was up and they permanently lost what mattered most; never again able to reclaim it or recover it. Preaching on this lesson to all of you would only come across as a threat and a warning. Don't get me wrong: We need to hear the deadly reality of forsaking faithfulness to God in favor of pursuing our earthly wants and desires. However, this isn't Gospel. This sort of preaching may scare you into believing, for a while. But that fear will subside, and when it does, the end result is often worse than what you began with.

This is why I direct your attention to the Old Testament lesson for today. I direct you to the realization and recognition of true, saving, repentant faith. “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Did you notice something here? This is a present-tense recognition. There's nothing hind-sight here. True, saving, repentant faith recognizes and praises God for the rich and abundant treasures that are ours right now in Christ Jesus.

That's just it—these are gifts of Jesus Christ. That's what the Hebrew words actually say when speaking of saving us and our salvation. “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might Yeshua us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His Yeshua.” Folks, it's all about Jesus. Our joy,

gladness, rejoicing is recognized only in Christ Jesus, and not just in a historical, spiritual kind of way, but in a real, present-tense tangible way. Look around you. The life-giving treasures of Christ's Word and Sacraments are right here, right now, in your midst. The unconditional grace, mercy, patience and love of God is all around you, right now. It's not a future-tense thing you have to wait for. It's right here, right now. As long as you have air in your lungs and sky over your head, you have the gracious patience and love of God. You have opportunity to simply turn back to God in humble repentance, turning back to find His loving open arms waiting to embrace you and carry you home to heaven to be with Him for all eternity.

Now, I want you to understand what this present-tense Gospel reality means for us in our daily vocations as we go out into the world to share and proclaim and lead others to the present and eternal joy of their salvation. That's what we're called to do. We're not called to keep this Good News a secret or leave it up to someone else to do the work of evangelism. We're all called to proclaim Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, wherever God leads us—at work, at home, at school, on the golf course, etc.

Remember the beginning of this sermon when I was talking about a loss? Now, think the loss hasn't happened yet, but It's not like you can't see the train coming down the tracks, barreling forward at the oblivious fool toiling away in their sinful love of self and self-centered greed. You can speak all day long: "The ones who love you are right here. What really matters is right here, right now. Stop. You are making a mistake. You will regret this." Unfortunately, these words seem to always fall on deaf ears. That is, until the person is later crying out, "I didn't know what a good thing I already had until it was gone. Please, put in a good word with God for me and

help me get it back.” Believe me; I understand why Jesus wept. I’m sure many of you do too.

Folks, I can’t faithfully tell you if you don’t start recognizing and cherishing the treasures in your midst, you will be tossed out of God’s kingdom into the outer darkness where you will weep and gnash your teeth in bitter agony. It’s the truth, but that sort of truth will only come across as an angry threat, which will ultimately drive you away from the one thing that can save you; the cross of Christ Jesus. I can’t make you recognize the treasures of Christ that are yours right now. I can’t make you recognize and be thankful for all the good things in your life right now. I certainly can’t make you recognize the fount, source and giver of all those good things. I can’t make you believe, nor can you make anyone else believe, no matter how much you threaten them.

All I can do is what all faithful preachers and teachers have done since Christ first commissioned them to “go and make disciples of all nations.” All any of us can faithfully do is point to these Gospel treasures in our daily lives, proclaiming the profound Gospel reality that is ours right now in Christ Jesus. Simply point to Christ and let Him handle the part about opening the eyes and ears of saving, repentant faith. “I cannot by own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, but the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies....” Faith alone in God’s grace alone, which He bestows upon us because of Christ alone: This is the Gospel message that saves you. This is the reality of Christ Jesus, crucified and resurrected for you—in your midst, right now. “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He has saved us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Salvation that will carry you into the new heavens and the new earth.