

Sermon - 08/17/2024

Thirteenth Week After Pentecost

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

WHEN THE WHOLE WORLD WALKS AWAY

Last week, in my first sermon as a pastor, we discussed what it meant to look on the Son and believe. That it meant to really look and let what you look at on a daily basis to be holy and that we look and remember the appearance of the things of God and especially the image of the Son of God. Today, Christ continues His teaching on the bread of life by saying, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and also the bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." At first, the people had thought that this bread that Jesus was referring to was the manna in the wilderness. That bread came in the morning and satisfied the Israelites in the desert one day at a time until the day before the Sabbath when they would gather a double portion of the bread. If they did not trust in God and took more bread than they were allowed, the bread would rot and be infested with maggots by the next morning. If any of you have ever experienced maggots in food, then you would not soon forget the feeling of disgust and the rancid smell. It is not pleasant. However, when you followed the command of the Lord to gather only as much as you needed for a day, then you were able to enjoy the bread which had the taste of a wafer made with honey. Honey is the same flavor as the scroll that Ezekiel eats when the Lord places the scroll in his mouth so that he may prophesy all the words to the rebellious house of Israel. The Word that God gives is sweet as honey when you chew on it, but in the book of Revelation John is given a scroll to eat that is sweet as honey in his mouth yet made his stomach bitter. Chewing on God's Word is a joy and it is sweet to continually meditate on it as Scripture interprets another, but internalizing what that Scripture means for you is much much harder. For when you read, mark, and learn Scripture, you have great joy in doing so and its taste is like honey. Yet, inwardly digesting this Word and letting your life and your mind be changed can, at times, be bitter. Your conscience can be struck with grief when you have not kept the commands of God. It seems like the more you know the Scriptures, the more you can feel deep inside yourself that you have offended the One Almighty and holy God. This grief is unlike many other feelings. It affects your whole body. When you feel guilt strongly enough your whole body reacts. You will have digestive problems, tense muscles, headaches and backaches, insomnia, and, in longlasting situations of grief, you will have a compromised immune system or even heart problems. Guilt is caused by doing something that is directly against your innermost values. So it makes sense that if you truly value God's Word as the inspired Word of God and the compass for your own moral existence, then you would feel this guilt. You would feel it, but you would also know what the remedy is. So, when Christ our Lord says something like, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves." When you hear these words, you hear something different than the world hears. The world hears these words as if Jesus is saying that you must be a cannibal eating human flesh and blood to have life in you. However, when we, the faithful, consider these words, we hear, "take and eat this is my body given for you."

We hear, drink of it all of you, this cup is the new testament in my blood shed for you. Our eyes are drawn to the table of the Lord, to the wedding feast which has no end. Our hearts yearn for the guilt we feel to be lifted and extracted week by week with the confession of our sins and the reception of absolution and the Lord's Supper. However, the world shies away from this most blessed Sacrament, and they join with hard-hearted Pharaoh in Egypt placing themselves under gods of many kinds and accepting bondage into slavery rather than freedom in Christ.

Sadly, the whole world would rather remain in slavery to the devil, the world, and their own sinful bodies rather than come to Jesus. Yet, further than this is the fact that Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 1, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing..." The definition for folly is a lack of good sense. So those who do not believe and are perishing because of their lack of faith think that the cross of Jesus Christ doesn't make any sense. They say that the Christian faith is merely a way to feel better about yourself or cope with something you have done in an irrational way. However, the truth is that an unbeliever hears the Word of the Gospel in quite a different way than the believer, but that does not and should not stop us from talking with them as often as we can about the Gospel in the Holy Scriptures. For who knows where the Spirit blows or whom the Father will call to faith on account of hearing the Word of truth. So, when it comes to Jesus and His cross, the whole world flees. They cannot stomach the idea that they need a Savior because they are sinful in their flesh and all the way to their core, and do not think that you are excluded from such sinful corruption. However, you are different because when you break God's Holy commands you come with bitterness within you hoping that God would still grant you forgiveness. The world does not do this. They do not come hoping for forgiveness, but they come with hardened-hearts believing they need no forgiveness. So the world walks away. Maybe even some of your own family have walked down the broad path that leads to destruction. Maybe they have quit eating the body and drinking the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in disbelief. Maybe you have been hurt by the unbelief of a friend, and let me tell you when a friend or a family used to believe and now they seemingly have gone the way of the world and walked away from the truth, it hurts worse than any other person whom you may meet that does not believe. And I know many of you have experienced this, and sometimes you may even wonder if you should join them by departing from Holy Mother Church and entering that outer darkness. So Jesus asks this question of disciples, but also of you, "Do you also want to go?" Let your answer be the answer of Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." So today I tell you, when the whole world walks away from Jesus, hold fast to your confession and listen even more carefully to the words of Jesus. For there is no other word that brings eternal life than the Word who became flesh and dwelt among, the Word who died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins, and the Word willingly gave His

own body and shed His blood for you that you might have eternal life and resurrection on the Last Day. Amen.

Now may the peace which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.