

2nd Sunday in Lent
March 13, 2022

There are many things that influence us and lead us in this life. In the beginning, we are led by the need to be nourished. We may not remember, but we are reminded with the small infants we see and know. Our lives are often led by our bellies. But there is more to life than the belly and the greatest of these is the reality of our need for love. We need community, for we were created for community.

There are three lessons today, all of which point to trusting the Lord above our circumstances. In the conflagration of today's world, there are so many things going on that we are easily distracted. From those who are constantly on electronic devices to war raging in our world, it is easy to get caught up in the moment and check out. When I say check out, I mean, become so absorbed by the moment that it chokes out reality. Whether it is fear and worry over circumstances, or something that is so distracting our minds that we do not pay attention to anything else. We live in an age of constant distraction.

There are enemies of the cross. What does this mean? The Lord God is the One who created all things and through Him alone there is hope and a future. This makes sense, for the Creator did not just create everything and let it go to sit back and watch. There is order. We all appeal to that order from time to time. But the world wants to establish its own order. Of course, with sinners at the helm, there are conflicts and divisions and war ensues. Whether it is in a small society or between nations, it is the same.

There are those who do not like the idea that they are not fine just as they are. It seems as though the worse someone is, the more they seem to act with hostility toward any idea that there is anything wrong. We know this too, for the moment we are confronted by sin we often have a list of reasons for our actions, but anything that takes us away from the love of the Lord, which is the eternal relationship into which we have been invited, is to be left behind so that we may walk in the way of the Lord.

Abram was given a promise. He trusted the promise and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness. We are to trust the Lord above all things. It is difficult in this world. We may desire good things, but we often let those good things become the object of our day. Abram desired a child to carry on the lineage. God promised, but where was the child? The promise was that his children would be as the numbers of the stars in heaven. How could this be? Abram trusted the Lord and we are in the lineage of Abram, for as many as come to the Lord and are given His righteousness become children unto Abraham (the name was changed from Abram, exalted father, to Abraham, father of many).

In the new lineage into which we are reborn, we are called to act as children of God. We see all around us those who are acting like children of this world. A world filled with desire to consume, take, have, want, we are called out to realize that in the Lord all that is needed has been and will be provided. We have the example not only of Paul and the saints of Scripture, but also of all of the faithful who have lived lives of faith. Follow their example. Learn how to live in the righteousness of Christ. He will help you each step of the way. Learn how to stand firm in the faith You have been given. Though it may seem far off, trust in the One who has given you His promises. He will fulfill all that He has promised.

There were some people who thought they were doing good who came to warm Jesus. He called Herod a fox. There seem to be three kinds of people in this world. There are the sheep, who seek to be faithful and live in the truth of the Lord. There are the goats who pretend

to be faithful, but for their own reasons, live for themselves. There are the wolves who are simply evil and do not care about what is right except what they think is right for themselves. I sometimes think of it in terms of the good, the band, and the ugly. They are everywhere and in all groups. Each does what they do for their own purpose. Our Lord calls us to live by His eternal purpose.

Jesus teaches us the pattern of how to live into a life that seeks righteousness. The way of the cross is set before us. Resist temptation and seek to live according to the Lord's commands and be healed of the disease of this age. The way, which is the difficulty we all have, is the way of the cross. Jesus knew He was heading to the cross. We too must take up our cross and follow Jesus if we are to live in the righteousness He gives. We often say this in the terms, "daily we must die to sin, death, and the devil." The path of salvation is to see shed a life that lives for the self in order to become children of God who dwell with Him forever.

Jesus was heading to Jerusalem, the only place where a prophet should be killed. He came to fulfill all prophecy concerning Him. We too are called to not set aside the call that is before us. Our Lord will accomplish all that He has promised.

When we are called to look to the examples of faith of those who have gone before us we see an interesting thing. It seems that the ones who had their hearts most set on heaven accomplished the most upon the earth. This is not a call to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good, but a call to live each day as if it mattered. It does, for the Lord will grow in each of us what He will, for His sake, as we live the life we have been given.

The evangelicals of the early nineteenth century in England, in the love of the Lord, pressed toward the goal of abolishing slavery. The movement spread and now slavery is illegal in all countries. It still takes place, but illegally. In that same century, American believers began a movement of creating hospitals all over the country. That is why many of them were once named after denominations or saints. Those names have been changed to fog the reality of their origins, was begun by people who had their hearts on heaven, but did the most in this world. Our system of higher education, the development of the scientific way of exploration, even the basis of our democracy was built upon the idea that all people are created equal, have their roots in the hearts of the faithful who sought to live a life of faith making a difference in this world. There would be no equal rights for women if it were not for the teachings of Christ. The world has always segregated women as the lesser, but Christ declared that we were made with two genders, but equal. This world seems to be countering that with something new, but it does not matter. Christ has called for us to live in this world, following the path that leads to righteousness, and making a difference in the lives around us.

Through all of this, the new creation in Christ emerges, one person at a time. He is the Master and we are His slaves. If we are the sheep, then we are no longer slaves to sin as are the goats and the wolves (the foxes). If we are in Christ, we now become slaves to the Master as He teaches us how to become children of God. Do not think this odd, it is the truth of the matter. We are no longer in bondage to that which would destroy us, but linked now with dependency upon the One who has redeemed us. The sin of this world is thinking that you are your own. The truth is that You and I were created and we belong to the One who made us. We are in His perfect and loving hands. Press on in faith, today, tomorrow, and when that Third Day comes, we will reach the goal. No longer obsessed with the preservation of this life which will die, we are called into the eternal life here, now, and forever. The war has been won, but the battle continues. Live in Christ and live today according to the Father's will. Amen.