

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 10)
Sunday, July 11, 2021 Sermon

Michal, David's wife despised her husband. Why? He's the king and he is dancing before the Ark of the Lord. There are those in this world who despise the things of the Lord. It is often fascinating to watch one who is hating on the Lord. I want to ask them, "If this is just a myth to you, why does it make you so angry that I believe?" For me, at least, it is just one more affirmation that there are spiritual things going on all around us.

The truth is that those who are in rebellion against the Lord cannot even stand the slightest display of affection for the Lord. Why such hatred? I do not know, but it is there. Do you cherish the life Christ has given you? Do you cherish the promise which is yours through your own baptism? Perhaps the simple statement that David was a man after God's own heart is demonstrated in David's willingness to love the Lord with abandon. Do you cherish the gift of life that You have been given by the Lord? Do you let His love pour out of you no matter what others think?

We have been called into the life of Christ. A part of this life is sharing with others what we have received. It is not a matter of being a street evangelist – although some may be called to such things – but about the reality that what is precious to you will come out through your words and actions. If your relationship with the Lord is precious to you, it will be evident in the life you live. Like David, there will be those spontaneous moments when you are demonstrating your love for the Lord. But do not be surprised that sometimes there will be those who despise you for it.

What you were taught in confirmation – clean hands, pure hearts, and do not accept what is false, nor act with deceit – do you seek to live this way? I often tease that all of Scripture is pretty easy to understand. The Lord wants us to behave. Most parents that I know want the same thing for their children. Children will reflect their parents – sometimes. Are you reflecting our Father who art in heaven? He has written His law upon our hearts. We may not understand good or evil, but we do know right from wrong. Do you practice these things?

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and said, "I thank You Father that I have not lost one." The Lord knows those who are His. In the mystery of our faith, as many as believe, to them He gives the power to become children of God. We are in the promise of God. You were baptized and this is the truth of what You have been given. Do not make light of the promise of God, but live fully in the truth He has revealed for Your sake. The Lord knows those who are His. Do you live as one who belongs to the Lord?

Scripture calls the hope we have an inheritance. We do not have it yet, but it is ours. It is ours not because of anything we have done, but because of what He has done. Our Savior has lavished upon grace upon grace. We are given great comfort because of what Christ has done. Trust then in His provision. You do not do what you do in faith to get anything, but because all that you need has already been provided. Living in trust and hope, in faith, we then embark on the glorious journey of daily being conformed to the image of the One and only, Christ our Savior. We are to live to the praise of His glory. This is the Good News. We are not on a journey of trying to be something. We have been made children of the Heavenly Father and so seek to have our lives conformed to that which is perfect and eternal. But the age-old problem of sin gets in the way. We defer to what we know and avoid the call the Lord gives us to come out of this world's way of doing things and into the presence of the Lord. Walk in the promise of the inheritance which is yours in Christ.

The Lord desires to prosper you and keep you from evil. The world is filled with wickedness and desires to hold you in its wicked grasp. There are those who would love to see the destruction of your faith. The only person with whom you can do anything is with yourself. Living circumstantially will cause you to be tossed by whatever wind is blowing that day. Living in the hope of Christ will lead you to hold fast to their eternal truth which has been revealed to you in Christ Jesus.

John the Baptist was called the greatest of those born of woman, yet his head was taken off his body in a fit of jealousy and rebuke against the truth he spoke. The word of the Lord is a two-edged sword and sometimes the cost is high. Will you reject the Lord in a momentary fit, thereby rejecting the hope and promise which is yours, or will you hold fast to the Good News which has been given you? This is a daily struggle, for the hatred of this world presses in and there are days when we are tempted to relinquish, give up, and just live the remaining years we have in peace. But every time we give up, we are giving up more than what is handed off in the moment. This is why, over and over again, we are encouraged to live in the hope of the inheritance which is ours by the grace of Christ.

The politicians will manipulate, steal, and even kill for their own reasons. Trusting the Lord is the only reasonable answer I can give anyone. What did the disciples of John the Baptist do? They came, took the body, and gave a proper burial. Do not miss the point of this. When faced with even the greatest wickedness, you and I are called to remain faithful and do the right thing. We are not to live our lives circumstantially, but faithfully, trusting that the Lord of all has purpose in everything that happens.

Our news is filled with increasing wickedness in our world. What are we to do? We are to seek to remain faithful to the One who has called us to walk by faith. No matter the circumstances, each day gives us opportunity to thank the Lord and seek Him in all of His ways. Yes, each day has enough trouble of its own. But also, greater is He who is in the world than all of those who would do us harm. The characters that brought about the destruction of the body of John the Baptist had their day, but they too joined John in the grave. Through the promise of Jesus, the hope we have in the resurrection, we have the eternal hope that because Christ has been raised from the dead, we too shall be raised with Him. How much more should we cling to the eternal promise which has been given us?

There are many times when things happen and we are not sure what to make of them. Do not look at what you see, but look to the One who is unseen. We have been given such a great hope and promise that, if you see these things honestly, it is beyond absurd to live moment by moment, being tossed about by the fickle nature of this world. Instead, each day, have your hope rekindled in the promise of the One who has already accomplished our salvation.

When asked what report to give to John while he was in prison, it was told him the things that Jesus was doing. When it comes to living our lives of faith, we are told that by our fruits, that is, through what we are doing, others will know that we are people of faith.

Yes, the wicked of this world are filled with hatred. Do not be surprised. There are always those who will castigate you, especially if your faith is front and center. So what? Do not be driven by the winds of this world, but dance with all your heart in the presence of the Lord. In Christ is the redemption of our souls. He who knew no sin was crucified for our sakes. What the world meant for destruction became the very cornerstone of our salvation. The Lord has already prevailed and by faith and through grace, He will lead you to where you need to be. Through all things, give thanks for the salvation which is yours in Christ. Amen.

Michal, David's wife, despised David for His abandon in dancing before the Lord.

This world does not cherish the gift of living in the Lord's blessing. Many laugh.

Perhaps the statement that David was a man after God's own heart is as simple as the fact that David loved the Lord above all things. Shall we start there?

We heard it last week. We have the admonishment to share.

David shared with all of the people.

You have heard that everything belongs to the Lord.

Do you live this way, or do you live with the notion that everything belongs to you?

You have heard what the Lord desires.

Have clean hands, pure hearts, and do not accept what is false, nor act with deceit.

The Lord knows those who are His.

Before you were in your mother's womb, He knew you.

Our Lord knows who will live in the grace and mercy He gives.

This does not mean that we live with abandon, for we do not know

It does mean that we look to the Lord for all things and trust

You know the Lord's will for you – to prosper in the life He gives you and to be kept from evil.

You have obtained an inheritance.

Think this through: you receive, upon Christ's death, His life

We have this even though we do not yet have it.

This world is cruel. Traps within traps. Deceit within deceit.

The wicked feed on the fears of others. Herod was king, yet fell for the trap.

Poor or rich, it does not matter – people fall into traps

Herod fell for the trap of Salome who fell for the trap of Herodias

The same kind of wickedness which brought Jesus to the cross.

The wickedness of this world

Yet, there were those who took the body of John and honored Him with a grave

Where do you place your hope? Is it in this world? Is it in the salvation which is yours in Christ? Where do you look? Ultimately, we are to look beyond what this world offers, for this world is temporary.

