



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 19, 2009
7th Sunday after Pentecost
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First Lesson: Ezekiel 2:1-3:4
Second Lesson: 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5
Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

The words that we often speak at the beginning of the service are called "The Invocation." We invoke the name of the Triune God to whom we belong. These words take us back to our baptism. We gather together to worship as those who have been baptized in the name of our God. The blessings that come to us in our baptism change us. We are forgiven. We are brought into God's family. We are clothed in Jesus' perfection.

The Invocation is not the only trip we make to our baptisms in worship. Another weekly reminder that Baptism is not merely a one-time, past event is the part of worship we call "Confession and Absolution." When we confess our sins and receive the assurance that Jesus has forgiven them, we are returning to the grace of God that we received in our baptism. Luther wrote, "Baptism means that the sinful nature in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." Each week we admit our sin and look to Jesus' life and death for forgiveness. Each week the person leading worship assures us of forgiveness or "absolves" us of our sin.

Every week in worship we respond to the gift of forgiveness through the Triune God by singing a song of praise. The song of praise may be different in each of the services we use but the reason for praise remains the same. Our Triune God acted in love that is beyond our understanding to take away our sins and plant the gift of faith in our hearts. Heaven is ours! We are forgiven! How could we react to this incredible, glorious truth with anything less than voices exploding to the glory of God!

Since our baptism, the new self that lives in us and loves God longs to praise him. More than that, our new self longs to know our God more and more. As we worship each week, God's Word speaks to us and strengthens us as we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This week as we worship, the readings focus us on the truth that the Word enables us to endure persecution for Jesus' sake and remain faithful. Each week, before we hear our God speak to us through his Word, we approach him in the Prayer of the Day and ask for blessings that focus our thoughts on the week's readings.

FIRST LESSON:

Ezekiel's experience is not the exception but the paradigm. The rejection that Jesus experienced from his own ultimately turned into hatred and bitter hostility. That was the experience of all the apostles and prophets. In fact when there is never any hostility from a rebellious people, either Jesus has changed his mind about persecution or we have joined the rebels! People should know that a prophet has been among them from the faithfulness of the prophet to the Word and to the Savior, whether they like the message or not. For whether they like it or not, it remains the only message that saves. It saves even in the face of persecution from those who should know better. In the face of hostility and persecution there is one thing that sustains and strengthens us and gives us peace and joy: The same

message of the gospel that provokes so much opposition is the source of all our own life and joy. Eat the scroll; savor its sweetness; devour it so that it becomes altogether a part of you!

Ezekiel 2:1—3:4

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.

God's Word is food for our faith that enables us to live for God in the face of unbelief. We pray that God's Word, that great food for our soul, would bless us, strengthen us, and enable us to live in faithful obedience to our God.

SECOND LESSON:

Opposition and persecution are guaranteed wherever the Word is proclaimed in its truth and purity—a point that Luther and the Confessions never tired of making. Yet God promises his abiding and saving presence, even if the outward evidence seems to contradict that beautiful promise. Yes, even if the rescue is delayed to the point of death! Again notice that Paul mentions not just opposition from outside of the Church but especially notes the opposition that came from those who once heard and knew the truth. It is the latter that is the most damaging and to us personally the most painful. But in it all may we prove faithful to the Word, to all of it, that we may also know the faithfulness of God to that Word; he promises persecution, and he promises that his Word will nevertheless remain effective. He has promised that ultimately we will be rescued to see his faithfulness in his own good time. What more could we want as people of God?

2 Timothy 3:10—4:5

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ

Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Paul's advice to Timothy to "Preach the Word" in the face of opposition serves us well today. We proclaim the Word in spite of any opposition and trust that God will produce results in his time and in his way.

THE GOSPEL:

It is quite bad enough when Jesus is rejected by those who do not know him. But how painful to him, so much so that in his state of humiliation he is amazed by it, when those who should have been first to recognize him instead reject him. The world, even our own so richly blessed country, exchanges the Child in Bethlehem for Santa Claus and the Risen Christ for the Easter bunny. No surprise there. But what of those in our own churches and families who think they know him so well that they no longer know him at all? He could do nothing there in Nazareth because in their unbelief; no one asked him to do anything. And in our midst? Were he still in his state of humiliation, would he be surprised at us who have had his Word for so long and still think so little of it? On the other hand, those who follow him in faithfulness have a stumbling block in their path: the unfaithfulness of those who should know better and then their ultimate hostility to the pure teaching and living of his Word. Only that Word and reliance on it gets us past that stumbling block; Jesus promised such rejection, and his Word even in that regard has proven true.

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

Do you view the weekly offering as an intermission or an act of worship? As you place your offering into the plate, do you recall God as the source of the gift you give? Do you view this offering as money lost to you or as money used to honor the one who first gave it to you? Faithful stewardship of all God's gifts, including money, is an act of Christian praise and worship.