

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twentieth Sunday After Trinity, October 17, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 325 (331:8) 352.340, 363

Lessons: Psalm 39:4-13; Colossians 1:9-14; Matthew 9:18-26

Sermon Text: Colossians 1:14.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

The assurance of having a good job done in building a house depends in large measure upon the qualifications of the house builder. Before we invest a sizable sum for the house, we want to be sure that the carpenter has a good reputation as a builder and the ability to do the work. Then we also can confidently look forward to the day when the house is done and not have to nervously wonder if the house will meet our expectations.

If this is so in mere material matters, then consider how much more important it is in spiritual matters. We want to know how we as sinners can be saved. We need to be very sure about this because it determines what will happen to us in eternity, whether we go to heaven or to hell. In the book of Colossians we find the very best qualifications for a Redeemer in Christ Jesus. Why do we say this? Consider what is said of Jesus Christ. ***“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy,”*** Colossians 1:15-18. In Colossians we also find these words about Jesus, ***“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”*** Colossians 2:3.

Furthermore, in Christ Jesus we have absolute assurance of redemption. Let us learn that as we consider,

THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT JESUS IS OUR REDEEMER

- 1. We need redemption because of our sins;**
- 2. We rejoice in the assurance of forgiveness.**

Our text speaks of Jesus and says that in him we have ***“redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*** In order to appreciate how precious a blessing that is we first have to know what the Bible says about our sins. Just what is sin? The Bible answers, ***“in fact, sin is lawlessness.”*** I John 3: 4. Sin is lawlessness. We sin when we do what God has forbidden in the Law. We sin when we fail to do what God has commanded in the Law. The holy God has set up a standard of holiness in his Law. He says, ***“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy,”*** Leviticus 19:2. But, we are guilty of trespassing; that is, we have missed the mark set for us in the holy Law. The Lord says, ***“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*** Romans 3:22-23

We all are guilty of lawlessness, transgression, trespassing, because we are all descendants of Adam. Paul writes, ***“Sin entered the world through one man,”*** Romans 5:12. The Lord looks down upon this world and pronounces all guilty. Through the psalmist he says, ***“All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one,”*** Psalm 14:5.

This is what God says of all of us. Do we apply these words to ourselves? Do we really put ourselves into the category of sinners? We know that there were those in Jesus' day that very carefully made a distinction between themselves and those whom they classified as sinners. They were the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. Jesus told a parable of two men who went to worship in the temple. The one was a Pharisee who denied

any sinfulness and thought he could justify himself by his good deeds. He said: ***“God, I thank you that I am not like all other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get,”*** Luke 18:11-12. This Pharisee not only did not consider himself a sinner, he even boasted of doing more than the holy God required. We all must very carefully guard against self-righteous thoughts in our own hearts. For there is always the danger that we will say to ourselves: I go to church every Sunday. I support the church with my offerings. I live a good, clean life. I help my fellowman that is in need. I work hard.

That all may be true; but does that mean we are without sin, and therefore need no forgiveness of sin? Let us take a closer look at what the holy God demands of us. He says, ***“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it,”*** James 2:10. Have we feared, loved and trusted in God with all our heart, soul and mind? Have we loved our neighbor as we love ourselves? Have we perfectly done all that God has commanded? John writes, ***“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,”*** I John 1:8. We must confess with St. Paul, ***“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing,”*** Romans 7:18-19.

So it is true that we not only are born in sin and are by nature ***“dead in transgressions and sins,”*** Ephesians 2:1, but we have transgressed God’s holy Commandments every day. Even when we try our very best to please God, we still fall far short of that perfection which he demands of us. We have to confess with Isaiah, ***“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags,”*** Isaiah 64:6. Because this is true, we also deserve the wrath and punishment of God because of our sin. We richly deserve that God should not only punish us by withholding his blessings from us, but also by giving us everlasting punishment in hell. Therefore, we should willingly confess, ***“We have sinned, and done wrong. We have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws,”*** Daniel 9:5. Our only plea should be that of the tax collector who came to pray in the temple and said, ***“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”*** Luke 18:15.

When we acknowledge that Jesus is our Redeemer, then ***we can also rejoice in the assurance of forgiveness.***

2.

Our text assures us of this. Paul says that in Jesus ***“we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*** The word translated as forgiveness in our text means remission of sins. To remit sins means to send the sins away so far that they will never be found, and can never again rise against us so that we are blamed. This thought of remission is brought out in Psalm 103:12, ***“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*** The prophet Micah also says that our merciful God will ***“tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea,”*** Micah 7:19. Through the prophet Isaiah, God says, ***“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more,”*** Isaiah 43:25. Again in the prophecies of Isaiah God tells us, ***“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you,”*** Isaiah 44:22. These are some of the precious assurances the Lord gives to us in the Gospel.

Now, why should the holy God, who is justly displeased with us, remit our sins? There has to be a good reason for God showing mercy to us instead of sending us to hell. The reason is told us in our text: In Jesus ***“we have redemption.”*** Paul writes, ***“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding,”*** Ephesians 1:7-8. Jesus has redeemed us. The word redeem also must be understood in its true sense. To redeem means to buy back by the paying of a ransom. Paul reminds us of our redemption when he says, ***“You were bought at a price,”*** I Corinthians 6: 20. And Peter tells us what that price was. ***“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect,”*** 1 Peter 1:18-19. God put our sins on his Son, Jesus Christ, and made him to suffer, bleed and die for our sins. Jesus was our Divine Substitute. God punished Him instead of punishing us. Isaiah says of Jesus, ***“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But***

he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed,” Isaiah 53:4-5. So we were redeemed and reconciled to God.

This work of redemption was accomplished for all sinners. Isaiah says, ***“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,”*** Isaiah 53:6. This is the precious message of redemption. This is the comfort that the Gospel proclaims. This is what God wants us all to believe and accept.

The only way remission of sins can be accepted is by faith in Christ. Those who stubbornly refuse to believe the Gospel do not have remission of sins. But, the Bible assures us, ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned,”*** Mark 16:16. Again, the Bible tells us, ***“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name,”*** Acts 10:43. Paul told the jailer at Philippi, ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household,”*** Acts 16:31. Jesus says, ***“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him,”*** John 3:36. The message of the Gospel could not be plainer or more precise. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

We know that of ourselves we are not good at all, but sinful. So then we must look only to Christ who redeemed us with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death. With such faith in our hearts we are assured of going to heaven. Such faith the Holy Spirit is working in our hearts even as we hear this Gospel preached. ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ,”*** Romans 10:17. May the Lord give us the grace to confess with the hymn-writer,

*“Lord, I believe what you have said,
Help me when doubts assail me;
Remember that I am but dust
And let my faith not fail me.” Amen.*

(Adapted from The Lutheran Hymnal 306:6)

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