

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, November 11, 2012

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

Hymns: 408, 384, 358m 156, 401.

Lessons: Psalm 49, Hebrews 7:24-27, John 12:23-33.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:17-21.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow redeemed in Christ our Savior:

What moves people to do what they ought to do? That which moves someone or tends to get him going is called an incentive. A word of encouragement may be an incentive which brings about willing obedience. We may speak of incentives also in bringing forth a sanctified life pleasing to God. First of all, of course, there must be faith in Jesus in the heart. Jesus in speaking about doing what pleases God says: ***"No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*** John 15:4-5 So then, when there is faith in Jesus, then we can speak of what should move us to lead a Christian life. Let us learn from our text:

WHY WE SHOULD WANT TO LEAD A HOLY LIFE IN REVERENT FEAR

1. We respect God who sees and judges all our life; and,
2. A great price was paid for our redemption.

Peter addresses believers in Christ in our text: ***"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."*** Let us note from our text that believers in Christ are referred to as strangers here on earth. The psalmist as a believer expresses himself, saying: ***"I am a stranger on earth."*** Ps. 119:19 Believers in Christ are strangers on earth, just as Abraham was a stranger in the promised land. The Bible says: ***"By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country."*** Hebr. 11:9 Peter in this Epistle addresses the believers as ***"God's elect, strangers in the world."*** 1 Pet. 1:1 In another chapter Peter gives this admonition to believers: ***"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*** 1 Pet. 2:11 In the last hymn in our Hymnal, the poet writes: ***"I'm but a stranger here, Heav'n is my home."*** (Hymn (660, v. 1) Looking forward to heaven with all its glory, we are satisfied to be strangers here on earth.

As strangers here, we should want to lead a holy life in reverent fear. The word "fear" is not used in the sense of being afraid of God. An unbeliever, indeed, has reason to be afraid because of God's wrath. The Bible says: ***"Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*** John 3:36 But when believers are admonished to fear God, what is meant is that they show respect for God.

As believers in Christ who respect God as our Father in heaven, we call on him in prayer. We respect God as the one who alone can answer prayer, and at the same time we approach God as dear children ask a dear father, and so we come with boldness and confidence.

In respecting God, we also remember that our Father is the holy God who passes judgment on all mankind. Our Father in heaven, our text says, ***"judges each man's work impartially."*** Paul explains what that means to judge impartially. ***"God does not show favoritism."*** Rom. 2:11 Paul also says that in the judgment on the Last Day, ***"God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.'"*** Rom. 2:6 For a person's works are the evidence of either faith or the lack of faith in Jesus. With faith in Jesus we can do good works but without faith in Christ ***"it is impossible to please God."*** Hebr. 11:6 Also we as believers in Christ are reminded

in Scripture: ***"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*** 2 Cor., 5:10

Also while we are still here on earth, the Lord judges all our thoughts, desires, words and deeds. As believers in Christ, we cannot neglect Christian conduct and think that just because we have come to faith, we cannot be condemned for doing wrong. Our Christian liberty as people who have been freed from the bondage of the Law by Christ dare not be used as a license to sin. Otherwise, the Bible says we would ***"change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."*** Jude 4. We should, then, as believers in Christ always heed this admonition: ***"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."*** Eph. 5:15-16 We should then fear to bring shame on God and his holy name. Paul told the Jews: ***"You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'"*** Rom. 2:23-24 So also as believers in Christ, we should so live among men in whatever position we have ***"so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered."*** I Tim. 6:1

The certainty that God sees and judges all our life is then indeed a powerful incentive to live a holy life, and not carelessly lose the faith which alone can save us in eternity. Paul writes: ***"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."*** Phil. 2:12

There is, however, an even more powerful incentive to move us to lead a holy life in reverent fear, and that is the great price that was paid for our redemption.

2.

Peter writes: ***"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."*** The precious price Jesus paid for our redemption is the incentive for leading a God-pleasing life. What we were redeemed from is called ***"an empty way of life handed down"*** to us from our forefathers. What every person inherits by birth from his parents is sin, and our parents in turn from their parents, and so on back to Adam.

Paul says: ***"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."*** Rom. 5:12 This life of sin is called empty in our text, useless, a life that can only end in eternal death in hell unless one is redeemed by Christ.

The price, then, that was needed to redeem us had to be something very precious. The ransom price for our redemption had to be more than ***"silver or gold."*** Such a ransom is perishable and altogether inadequate to pay for our redemption. The psalmist writes: ***"No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him - the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough."*** Ps. 49:7-8 But the blood of Jesus is enough; it is altogether sufficient and adequate, for it is ***"the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."***

The blood of the Lamb of God was prefigured all through the Old Testament times by the many bloody sacrifices of lambs in the ceremonial worship of the Israelites. The Bible says that the ceremonial law required the shedding of blood, and that ***"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** Hebr. 9:22 So in God's plan of redemption for sinners, he sent his own Son, who is perfectly holy, to be the Lamb who shed his blood for sinners. John the Baptist pointed to him and said: ***"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*** John 1:29 And John the Evangelist wrote: ***"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin."*** I John 1:7 The blood of Jesus could redeem us from our sins because he ***"is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners."*** Hebr. 7:26 This was the precious price paid for our redemption.

Furthermore, all this was decided by the heavenly Father way back in eternity. Peter writes of Jesus: ***"He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."*** So often in our day false teachers ridicule the redemption of sinful mankind by the bloody sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. That is thought of by them to be altogether too old-fashioned for this so-called enlightened age! But our text says this was God's plan from eternity. Jesus was chosen before the foundations of this earth were ever laid. Peter preached the same thing on Pentecost when he told the Jews: ***"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him"***

to the cross." Acts 2:23 What God planned in eternity, he brought to pass when his time had come for Jesus to be made man and finally to be put to death on the cross. Peter says: ***"He was revealed in these last times for your sake."*** The Bible says of Jesus: ***"He died for all."*** 2 Cor.: 5:15 But only the Christians are finally saved, for unbelievers reject the redemption God planned for all mankind.

It is only through Christ that anyone can come into the proper relationship with God. Jesus says: ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** John 14:6 Peter says in our text: ***"Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."*** Note the importance of Christ being raised from the dead! On the day we call Easter, we by the grace of God celebrate that great festival of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That is so important, for by raising up his Son from the dead, the heavenly Father was acknowledging in a most wonderful way that Jesus really was the Lamb of God whom he had foreordained to be the Savior of the world. By raising up Jesus the Father was also proclaiming to mankind that the sacrifice of his Son was the perfect sacrifice for sins. So it is that the Bible declares: ***"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."*** Rom. 4:25 So it is that we are assured: ***"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting mans sins against them. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** 2 Cor.. 5:19,21

We are justified! We are declared righteous! We have the certain hope of sharing the glory of heaven with Christ to all eternity! What greater incentive could there be to move us to lead a holy life in reverent fear!

May the Holy Spirit move us to say with the poet:

"Grant that I only Thee may love
And seek those things which are above
Till I behold thee face to face,
O Light eternal, through Thy grace." Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 398: 4)

Delivered March 12, 1989, edited by Robert Mehlretter.