

Holy Trinity - 5/27/2018

Texts: Isaiah 6:1-7; Romans 11:33-36; John 3:1-17

Note: A beloved 14-year-old member of the congregation, +Adam Mitchell Clack+, died suddenly in his sleep earlier in the week.

The author, playwright, and Christian, Dorothy Sayers, wrote in 1939 an essay entitled "Strong Meat" (the title from some words in the King James translation of Hebrews 5) which contains a somewhat tongue-in-cheek catechism-like set of questions and answers. Sayers writes the question, "What is the doctrine of the Trinity?" And her answer? "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the whole thing incomprehensible."

Though intended as hyperbole, Sayers nails down the reality of God: incomprehensible. I suppose she's in some way paraphrasing what St. Paul writes about God in Holy Scripture: **"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"**

And this week we are confronted with just how deep, just how inscrutable, just how much beyond us our Lord truly is. The Lord says, **"my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

When we face death - the death of whomever, but especially a death of someone young like Adam that is so sudden and unexpected - then the inscrutableness, the not-our-thoughts-and-not-our-ways-ness of the Lord is right here in front of us, unavoidable, demanding us to pay attention to it. We can't escape it. God is God, we are

His creatures and subject to Him and His will; and that can be a terrifying and mournful - even infuriating! - place to be.

But God does not leave us without comfort. He does not leave us stuck insofar as His thoughts and ways are higher than ours. He reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures and tells us what we need to know; He gives to us what we need to receive.

He comforts us with these things which will *truly* comfort us, because they deliver to us His Holy Spirit, the Comforter; because they give to us peace and joy, even amidst our mourning and weeping; because they fill our ears, eyes, hearts, and bodies with Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus, who has conquered death; Jesus, who has won the victory; Jesus, who has taken our sins upon Himself and paid for every last one of them with His holy precious blood and by His innocent suffering and death.

We *need* this comfort. We cannot live without this comfort. And so there are two places we're going to go for Christ's comfort this morning. We're going to go to two of the places where Christ *gives* to us His forgiveness which He won for us on the cross. These are tangible, real, physical places with tangible, real, physical things that God uses to *give* us forgiveness and life. God *gives* to us the comfort of knowing that He loves us and He has accomplished all the work of saving us from death and from our sins.

First we're going to look to the Baptismal Font for comfort. Jesus tells Nicodemus that **"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."** Of course, this means that one enters the kingdom of God through the new birth of water and the Spirit. Jesus is talking about Holy Baptism.

What else does God promise us about Holy Baptism? Christ teaches us that **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."** As we heard last week in Peter's sermon at Pentecost, in Holy Baptism you receive **"the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."** Elsewhere our Lord promises you

through Peter that **"Baptism now saves you"**; that Baptism is **"an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."**

Paul assures us about the comforting gift of Holy Baptism in Romans chapter 6. We'll hear this again and talk about it again tomorrow, but we need to hear it today, too: **"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."**

The giving into death of Jesus and the belief in Jesus and the life in Jesus is all given to *you* in your baptism. Behold how God loves you and reveals His mysteries to you there. **"For God loved the world in this way"** - and have no doubt, that *you* are included when Jesus says "the world." **"For God loved the world in this way, that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that all who believe in him would not perish but have eternal life."**

The second place at which we will seek God's comfort today is here at His altar and at the rail where we receive from Him the Sacrament of the Altar; or another name for it is the Holy Communion.

Here at the Altar, Christ gives us His Body and Blood. His *true* Body and Blood, the real thing, the same which hung on the cross of Calvary, laid in the tomb, and was raised on the Third Day.

Jesus wants us to eat and drink - *he wants us to receive His flesh and blood* - because with this meal comes His gift of the forgiveness of your sins. Again, just like in Holy Baptism, Christ gives to you the forgiveness of your sins. He promises this: **"Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Drink**

of it, all of you. This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

In the Divine Service the Pastor, after speaking Christ's words, then adds the promise and blessing, *"The peace of the Lord be with you always."* That's because these holy things of God - the Body and Blood of Christ - are taken from the altar and touched to your lips in order to make you clean. You are able to confidently stand in God's presence, able to assuredly know that when the Lord calls you to Himself you will go with no debt, no transgressions, no corruption, but instead you are ransomed, righteous, and holy. You are no longer God's enemy, no longer opposed to Him. Instead, God is reconciled to you through Jesus, and that reconciliation is given to you in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now the forgiveness is comforting enough, but there's more than just forgiveness in the Sacrament of the Altar. Especially now, when we mourn and grieve the loss of one member from our presence; this is when we need the other comforting part of this Sacrament: it's what we're describing when we talk about it as Holy Communion.

When we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ, we are made one with Jesus. And just as while you and I eat we are made one with Jesus, we also are made one with one another and with the whole Christian Church on earth...*and with all the believers in heaven.* This is why the Pastor prays in the Proper Preface *"with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven..."*

We are joined into the entire timeless majesty of the eternal worship of Christ when we come to the Altar and feast on the Lord's Supper. And we do it alongside one another who are here and alongside everyone who has died in Christ and now rests from their labors, waiting for the resurrection of the body on the Last Day.

So come to this altar today and be united with one another, and also with Adam, Wilma, Kenne, Irma, Jimmy, John, Charles, Woody, Tom, Peg, Eugene, George, Isaac, Elijah, Bobby, Pastor Martin, James, Elizabeth... When you come to eat and drink today you come and share in the everlasting feast of victory with *all* believers in Christ.

What comfort our Lord has for us today:

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

"Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Thanks be to God in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. He loves the world. He loves you.

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