

Pentecost Eight

07.10.16

Luke 10:25-37

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

[Colossians :13-14]

In the Name of Christ + Jesus our Lord

Another horrific week in lengthening Pentecost season – about only uplifting report in past seven days was patient / precise work by NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory putting Juno, three point five ton satellite, into twenty month orbit around planet Jupiter!

Other reports? To be honest they were dispiriting / crushing; they are triggers for cynicism / helplessness

It is far too early to make responsible comments about what is going on (or coming down) in this culture, but, since we are Lord’s baptized people, it is not too early to reinforce context, Life into which Lord’s Baptism has placed us

Early in this Pentecost season, as we began to make our way through Gospel readings from Luke, it was noticed that there are startling contrasts between richness of Holy Trinity’s Life / emptiness of world’s life

It was also noted that baptized people wonder, when many more other people are being impacted by world’s emptiness, why such people are not pushing to get into Church’s Liturgy so they can be exposed to Trinity’s richness?

As these Gospel readings stretch out over this Pentecost season, we’re beginning to see how overwhelming world’s emptiness is, but that seeing has numbed us so much we hardly notice it!

/, if we aren’t noticing emptiness, how then are we going to push to get to Liturgy / Life of Holy Trinity?

Such reality, pulled from Gospel readings, shows how much of grip unholy trio (sin, Satan, death) has on people of this world, grip that even extends to Lord’s baptized people as it triggers another week of horror

It does appear that gods of this world are at top of their game now / that their self-centering, violent ways are going to have last word!

Thankfully, though, we have come into another reading from Luke today, reading that plunges into this world / reveals, yet again, it is our Lord / his Life that has last word!

This passage, involving lawyer’s question / story of good Samaritan, is highly familiar (this is dated observation, but if you have been around Church’s Liturgy since middle 1960s when three-year biblical lectionary made its debut in Lutheran churches, this may be fifteenth or sixteenth time we have confronted it!)

Because this passage has made its way into our lives so many times, we are tempted to assume or to skip over its details

To break through such assumption / skipping, it is very helpful to notice verses between last Sunday's Gospel / one for today

Last Sunday we were reminded that Lord baptizes his people so they can be preparers for his way into this world / so they can serve as pointers to his Life

Directed / sustained by our Lord, those thirty-five or thirty-six pairs of people who went out as his preparers / pointers served well; they returned in deep joy as they saw world's demons blunted / overwhelmed by Jesus' Name

Jesus then made mysterious comment that referred to Satan's destruction through Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday

He also cautioned his followers to rejoice more that they are marked as his people / to rejoice less over collapse of demonic powers

Jesus went on to rejoice in Holy Spirit / to give thanks to Father for hiding "these things" from wise / understanding, revealing them instead to little children

"These things" include everything that Jesus has been doing in his ministry along with activities of his followers

"These things" have been given to Jesus by Father; no one can see tight relationship between Father / Son unless Son reveals it

Jesus then turned to his disciples / privately said they were seeing things that prophets / kings wanted to see but could not, things they wanted to hear but could not (could it be prophets / kings are being identified as wise / understanding?)

Abruptly, verses now shift to today's Gospel

Passage opens with question from lawyer (could he also be one of wise / understanding people referenced earlier?)

From biblical studies we know that these lawyers were affiliated with Pharisees; they were well taught in Torah, Law of Moses; they were well-versed in first five books of OT; they were part of movement that expanded original Ten Commandments to six hundred thirteen!

Lawyer's question is thoughtful – What shall I do to inherit eternal Life? – but it is testy (recall that Jesus' relationship with Pharisees was tumultuous!)

Notice, too, that question is self-absorbed one – What shall I do?

Jesus does not answer question directly, but asks lawyer to define Law

Lawyer defines it fully (from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Shema) / Jesus recognizes he has it right; he tells lawyer to follow that definition / he will live
Lawyer, though, is not done with his testing of Jesus / presses him to spell out what neighbor is (well-taught Jews had, basically, defined "neighbor" as fellow-Jew, excluding all others)

In response, Jesus relates story of good Samaritan:

- Man is assaulted on dangerous road / left half-dead
- Jewish priest / Levite see him but do not stop to help
- Samaritan, however, does stop / gives beaten man tremendous assistance

Jesus then asks lawyer which of these three people was neighbor to victim

Lawyer is correct when he states it is Samaritan, he is one who showed compassion / mercy

So Jesus tells lawyer to imitate that Samaritan!

What do we make of this familiar passage, knowing that we are born into this world then re-born into Life of Holy Trinity, knowing that we have emerged from horrific week, knowing that Pentecost season continues to lengthen?

Remember what triggered telling of this parable?

Expert in Law of Moses wanted to know what HE had to do to inherit eternal Life!

Our Lord did not answer question directly, but he gave him / us another perspective, one that points to Life of his Father / Spirit

He revealed Father's Life to be dripping with mercy, one that overflows with compassion because it streams from his agape, his self-less love that intended for all world's people (even when they are not deserving of it!)

It is startling to recognize that this Life reaches into lives that are wounded / beaten

Such recognition gives us long / healthy pause

Wounding / beating in this passage does mark most of world's life

We have been baptized as Lord's people, but we also recognize, because of living in this world, that we are under continual pressure / attack from attractive yet destructive realities of sin, Satan / death

In this passage, what created robbers, people looking only for themselves, people who have no regard for another individual? Realities of sin, Satan / death!

In this passage, what caused priest / Levite to pass by man near death? Realities of sin, Satan / death!

In this passage, what created prejudice, bad blood / hatred between Samaritans / Jews, driving it for hundreds of years? Realities of sin, Satan / death!

Such realities can be met only by mercy / compassion streaming from Father to Son to Spirit, then pulsing through lives of Jesus' followers

This mercy / compassion is not soft reality, it is hardened one, it is one that emerged from Good Friday / Easter Day!

It is reality strong enough to confront instinctive self-centering of us / all world's people, it is strong enough to break it down, it is strong enough to re-set our lives in Life of Holy Trinity

My friends, world thinks this reality is ignorant / unattractive, but world could not be more wrong!

World desperately needs reality of Lord's Life piercing it, it just cannot see it or hear it... yet

We're stepping off to another week in lengthening Pentecost season, one that may be horrific or it may not

Through mysterious workings of water that was splashed on us at Baptism, may Lord's Life continue to drive through all that we are / do as his people!

Now may the peace of the Lord God, which is beyond all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus our Lord