

Sermon 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, June 14, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well it feels like summer is finally here with temperatures in the 90s last week. Hot, humid yard work has been more draining. Any outside work for that matter has been more difficult - painting, fixing up, working on cars, gardening, mowing lawn, and trimming, even carrying bags in from the car.

Such heat reminds us of another kind of heat. That is the heat of God's judgment. In today's second reading Paul says that Jesus helped us out while we were still sinners. We were saved from God's wrath. And he says we were God's enemies. Oh boy! There is indeed, "Hell to pay." Of course, Paul speaks of the eternal Lake of fire which sounds to me like it might be quite hot indeed.

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the Middle Ages, the great empire broke up into smaller kingdoms with castles, Kings, Queens, Lords, and Ladies. The Lord was someone who owned land, from which we get our current idea of a "landlord." Tenants worked the land and gave a portion of the crops to the Lord. The Lord was in charge he owned the land he made the rules. Even in early United States history, only landowners voted and developed the rules and paid most of the taxes. They controlled the land; therefore, they had the most responsibility. But the Lord says the whole earth belongs to him. He is the owner, ruler, and Lord of all. It is as we pray, ... I believe in God the Father Almighty.

Well what kind of Lord God almighty is he? In Matthew we learn more about that. He says Jesus went through all the towns and villages preaching good news of the Kingdom healing every disease having compassion on the people there were like sheep without a Shepherd. And then he sent out his 12 to do the same – Jesus told them to do the same. He says to preach that the Kingdom of heaven is near, heal the sick, raised the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, and drive out demons. Then Jesus reminds his disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give." What kind of Lord God Almighty do we have? A gracious Lord God Almighty indeed.

Saint Paul continues this idea in his writing from Romans. He wrote that God demonstrated his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Wow what can we say in response to that?

From time to time quite a ruckus develops when judges are nominated to their positions. The recent debacle over the nomination of Supreme Court Justice Brent Kavanaugh is still fresh in our memory. There can be arguments and there can be debates about whether or not the candidate is fit for the office and so on. Not so with the Lord. Jesus Christ has been established as the judge over the living and the dead. He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and from thence he will come to do his judging. One judge has been appointed by the Lord and owner, and that is Jesus Christ.

As we learn in the scriptures, we have been justified by his blood, and we were reconciled to God through him. Further, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Our Reading from Exodus also has a wonderful section on the graciousness of the Lord. "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on Eagles wings and brought you to myself." This is a perfect example of our life with God. From time to time the scriptures talk about these "eagles wings." My favorite example of eagle's wings is when eaglets learn to fly. The parent eagle takes the eaglets on its back high up into the Sky. Then the eaglet is dropped off of the parents in order to learn to fly. As you might imagine, the first attempts are quite awkward. The eaglet flits and flutters and tumbles down, down, down. When it is obvious the eaglet it is in danger, the parent swoops underneath and catches its young on its back again. Back up they go. The eaglet is dropped off once again, caught, given a ride back up, and the process is repeated until the eaglet is ready to fly on its own.

This is a perfect example of our life with God. In the Old Testament, God says, "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession." The people responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said." Our response would be the same, we try but like that baby eaglet, we fail. The Lord catches us with his forgiving love, reinstates us to the heights of sonship, and we try again.

Those of you who have tried the Jack Rabbit, Python, or other coasters at Kennywood know what it feels like when you are falling. You can feel it in your belly when you're going down. It's quite apparent - and with the roller coaster, it's all part of the fun. We also can feel when we are falling away from God's will and his covenant for our lives. Our conscience quickly lets us know. When that happens, it's time to return to our Heavenly Father's grace and have him reaffirm his covenant with us. When we drown out the falling feeling and don't look for God to catch us, things will end up poorly. When we don't think we need God to catch us and we flip and flutter and tumble on our way down, things will end with a thud.

It has been maybe a little uncomfortable for us with the recent heat, yet we remind ourselves that winter comes soon enough, so we bear it. However, we do not want to bear the heat of God's judgement. We thank God for catching us and carrying us - saving us from sin and his wrath and the lake of fire. We praise him for reconciling us unto himself through Christ. May the recent heat remind us of the certainty of God's justice and turn us back to the path of righteousness. As we begin the season of Pentecost, we pray God's Holy Spirit upon us that he would strengthen our faith and lead us in the righteousness and the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ who has reconciled us to our gracious Lord God Almighty. Amen

Pastor Ron Breight

Christ Lutheran Church, Forest Hills, Pennsylvania