Exodus 16:2-15; Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45; Philippians 1:21-30 • Matthew 20:1-16

The world is contentious and many have discontent. The infection is lethal. It infects us too. This is nothing new. When people draw away from God, the level of their discontent increases. The way of life is not to seek what pleases you, but to do what is pleasing according to the One who made you.

From the beginning of this age until now, there is the ebb and flow of life that draws near and then wanes. Yet, the way of the Lord is consistent and clear. The Lord says, “draw close to me and I will draw close to you.” Because of the existentialist pollution of our age, we think there is some magic trick, we must learn. We think that we need to go deeper into ourselves. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The way of the Lord is easy. Has not our Lord told us to give our burden to Him? Has He not said that His yoke was light and the burden easy?

Why then do you contend with the Lord? Just as they did wandering in the wilderness, so also we tend to do in our time. “Where is the Lord?” “Where is He to be found?” But these are the arguments of those who lean on their own understanding and do not come into the wisdom of the Lord. Lay down your arms of hostility, come, reason with the Lord and He will bring you to your right mind. He has not come to torment, but to release. Please hear that I do not say, “choose.” To choose is to retain control. What I say is the truth. Unless you lay your life down and place it in the hands of the Almighty who made you, the battle continues.

I have heard on many occasions that one must accept Christ. Even the demons accept Christ. Accepting the truth that God is, is no feat. It is the truth. One day, all will bend the knee and proclaim the truth that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. All things have come into being through Him and apart from Him, nothing has come into being that has being. What then shall we say? Do not merely accept what you know to be true, but surrender. In the battle of this age, the war is already over. The battle rages and those who come to Christ come in terms of surrender.

When this is realized, you come into the truth that to live is Christ and to die is gain. This is not some nihilistic delusion, but the truth that Christ is all in all. Apart from Him is the way of nothingness. In Him is life and a wellspring of life. If you have been paying attention over the past few weeks, you will notice that many of the things we have learned from Scripture come together to paint the grand picture of God’s design. There are many ways to say it, but only One truth who is Christ our Savior. If you know this, then give thanks to the Holy Spirit who has moved your heart to begin to see the truth of eternity.

I care not for this world’s tirade against the Lord. It will continue until that final day when all shall stand before the Lord. But between this day and that, there is the call of our Lord and Savior to be about the Father’s business. Did not Jesus say that of Himself? Have we not been told, have you not heard that in this life of salvation we shall become like Christ? We are all called through the grace of our Lord and Savior to walk the walk He sets before us. The time for lingering at the gate is over. Too many ponder and want to get it right. As long as you are depending upon yourself, you will never get it right. That which is imperfect cannot choose the path of perfection. It takes a perfect man to do anything perfectly. You and I cannot perfectly repent. We cannot perfectly forgive. We cannot do any of the things perfectly that we are commanded to do. The amazing thing about grace is that when it is lived, when it is applied, it makes that which is imperfect, perfect. Salvation comes only in the journey and in no other way. Understanding comes only through the living and no amount of prognostication will ever reveal...
the simple truth which I have spoken this day. Yet, we also know that even if we were to gain all knowledge and communicate with the angels in their language and know all mysteries, apart from the love of God which is poured in through Christ our Savior, we are just so much noise that ends in silence. We have been called and tasked to take up the cause of Jesus and live it out in this place and at this time.

When Jesus told the parable of the vineyard, He was giving us instruction to get into His realm and live according to His Word. Many will argue about what is fair and just. The imperfect have no idea of what either of these ideas mean. Is it just for Jesus to bring forgiveness to the rightly condemned? Yet, this is what He does for all who come to the Father through Him. Is it just that the Holy Spirit heals one and not another? Such silly talk from people who do know yet know that God is Sovereign over all He has made. Only He who is perfect knows perfect justice. Only He who is perfect knows what is fair. Let us leave behind the elemental things to progress into the life of faith into which we have been called. Whether one does little or much means nothing. This age of celebrity and fame lifts up those who promote death while reviling those who live humble lives of truth. So be it.

Choose this day who will be Lord of your life. Will it be you? Will it be those who influence you or will it be the Word of truth, Jesus our Savior who has come to put us to work in His vineyard. Each day has enough work. As Jesus said, “the harvest is ripe, but there are always too few to do the work.” He commanded that we pray to the Lord of the harvest. Do not ask if He is calling you. He is calling you!

Why are we living in an age of diminishing participation and increased expectation? Either the Gospel I preach to you this day is false, or else the Lord is up to something. Any who have even the most fundamental grasp of history know that every time the devil proclaims that God is dead and the church has fallen, there in the ashes rises something even stronger and greater. Jesus said heaven and earth shall pass away, but that His Word would be forever. I know this is most certainly true and give a witness of this truth that you may enter into the vineyard and be one of His own, now and forever. How much we accomplish does not matter. How long we are in the vineyard does not matter. The reward for all who come into the Lord’s domain is the same – the blessing of eternal life.

As we live this life which we have been given in Christ, it is to live it with the whole of you are, with all of your being. Jesus did not come to save a part of you, but the whole of you. In this sense, God is a jealous God and will not settle. He will not stop until the whole of you is Holy, even as Christ is Holy. First, last, in between; who cares? To be a part of His kingdom is more than any of us in this age will ever be able to begin to comprehend. It is a gift. A true gift that is promised by God, delivered through your baptism and entered into when you surrender to the One who calls you. These simple words are the means by which you enter into salvation.

Some will come slowly, spending their lifetime surrendering to Christ. Others will come quickly. Still others will wait until the last possible minute. Do you not hear what Jesus is saying? It has always been this way. He know those who are His and He thanked the Father before hand that not one of those known would be lost. There is nothing in all of creation that will ever be able to separate you from the love of God which is given you through the Lord.

Come as you are and know that if you genuinely enter into the Lord’s work, you are really entering into His rest. His peace, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your heart and mind fixed upon the One who redeems You. He will grow in you His image. He will fulfill all that He has promised. There is nothing to fear when you are in the arms of the Almighty. Your
purpose is defined. Your hope is secure. Your life, which is eternal, shall be resurrected with Him to be in Trinity forever. This world is practicing what it has always practiced, looking for relevance and meaning. Relevance and meaning are found only in the One who made all things. You have beheld Him and He is with you. Do not marvel that Jesus has done these things, for with God all things are possible. Instead, marvel that the Lord would include you and me in His plans. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Do you not know that those who are first in heaven take off their crowns and throw them at Jesus feet? All honor and praise is directed to the only One to whom it is due.

Some still linger at the gate. Some want to figure all of these things out before proceeding. Many are indifferent. They will blame whomever to avoid the simple truth that we all will one day stand before this One we call the Christ. Even Pilate said, “Behold the man.” He then went no farther and gave way to the crowd. The Lord has called you and is serious about walking alongside you all the days of your life. Your life is yours to do with as you please.

My life was given to Christ long ago and it is His to do with as pleases Him. These are not idle words, nor poetic speech, but the truth. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I am united with Christ in His death and I have the promise that I am united with Him in His resurrection. My friends, there is nothing more important than my asking if Christ is walking with you. I am not talking about accepting Him. I am talking about getting there before everyone else who now denies it and knowing that Jesus is your Lord and God, your Savior and the One who has called you by name and for the Father’s purpose.

May you be blessed in the only assurance of this age: that you know Jesus is Lord. You who are in Him, get into the vineyard and stay there! It’s about to get very rough for those outside His vineyard. Amen.