

Sunday, November 10, 2019  
22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Do you hear what the Lord is saying? It is not so clear in English, but as intended from the beginning, to hear and to obey are linked. If it helps, if one has headphones on, they are listening to music, but if one is keeping the rhythm of the beat physically, they are hearing the music. Maybe this is a little nit-picky, but in a world that has become so sloppy about so many things, we sometimes do need to pay attention to the details. A journey that begins half a degree off in trajectory will never come close to its target.

Global politics have always been influential in the course of things in this age. When Haggai was raised up by the Lord, Cyrus, who feared the Lord (but no one else), allowed those in captivity to return to Israel. Mind you, only a minority of Jews went back; many had assimilated into the cultures into which they were brought. In fact, because of the captivity, synagogue worship developed and, as a result of only a minority returning, many began to travel throughout the world such, that by the time Paul traveled around the Roman Empire, there were synagogues just about everywhere he went.

The temple was rededicated and remained (with the exception of a desecration by the Greeks) until the Romans tore it apart leaving not one stone touching another in accordance with the prophecy of Jesus.

So why do we need to know these things? As an historian, the first thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. The other thing is that the insanity of illogic has always been alive and well throughout history. One of the Cardinal Virtues that has been uplifted by the church over the years is Prudence, otherwise known by the name *common sense*. I'm not sure why we call it common, for in times like these, it seems anything but common. We might say logical, but then, I'm doubtful that many truly think logically anymore. If something is said enough times, we believe it no matter how illogical it is.

One of the most illogical intellectual accomplishments for a non-prudent person is to deem oneself so intellectual superior that they are willing to believe nonsense to prop up their own sense of superiority. We see this with many of the illogical political propositions which have gained a following in our day. In Jesus' day, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. What then is the point? I mean, if we live a few short years and then that's it, what is the point of worrying about these things? I think the same of the fervent atheist. Why are you so fervent? A few short years and then nothing you think of matters. I really do not mean to be offensive, but even the point of Buddhism is the same. The goal is to see all the colors merge into one. That's a poetic way of saying, "Become nothing." Ultimately, what's the point? None of these things fulfills any understanding I have of common sense.

Here's why: we have within us the urge for relevance and importance. If the evolutionist is correct, then why is this a part of the human psyche? On the one hand, the idea of pure socialism is that we all work together esoterically for the betterment of the whole of humanity. Nice thought, so why do we find those on top having an extra share? You know, the elite special ones who are exempt from what we rabble get? It just seems so much excuse for what we have seen throughout history. There are those, for whatever reason, who feel they are privileged. At least, that is the only thing I am able to reason from folk who act this way.

Getting to the bottom of the whole sin thing, the real issue is between those who want things the way they want them and those who realize that this creation belongs to God. In other words, the criminal on the right and the one on the left. One asks Jesus to remember Him and the other goes to

death cursing God. So it is that the one group approaches Jesus with a crazy story in an attempt to trick Jesus, "Who's wife will she be?" Having been trapped from time to time by such inane questions, I marvel at Jesus' calmness. The unexpected answer. Oh, He answers alright, but are we listening to the answer? Do we hear?

More than just telling us something that may cross over our ears, do we hear? In eternity things will not be as they are here. What does this tell you about some of our expectations, especially when someone dies and we have all these nonsensical platitudes the world heaps upon us. This is what Scripture makes clear: in eternity, it will begin with each one of us standing before Jesus. It will not be as we may expect.

In eternity, there is no marriage. Well then, marriage is something for this age and not the next. Before you start protesting, realize that Jesus has been making clear from the beginning that the world we are now in is temporary. But there is another thing that Scripture has been telling us all along too. The biggest problem we have in our thinking has to do with time. For God, all time is now. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Moses for that matter, are not dead historic figures, but God sees them, so to speak, right now. He sees them living, breathing, and carrying on with the life we read about. We say it was then. God sees it as now. The freedom we have right now, in this moment, we also have in every future moment we will have. He does not control us any more in the future than He does right now. If you will, at that time, He simply sees us doing what we are doing tomorrow, the day after, or twenty years from now. All of this thing we call our life God sees both as the whole and in each of its individual moments and He does all of this at the same time (knowing that using the word *time* is really contradictory). God is the God of the living and not the dead. That is more fact the most factual thing we can think of.

Now, one of the pet peeves I have with the contemporary idea that Christians are sexist pigs is that it is patently because of Christ that Feminists can be Feminists. I find it absolutely illogical that Feminists do not have a problem with Islam. I find it amazing in our day that the modern Sadducees are so skeptical of anything to do with Jesus, but will not stop to think how illogical their thinking is.

In a world filled with noise, some are listening, but it seems too few hear what the Master of us all is saying. Sadly, this is true in the church as well. Do you hear the voice of the Master? He said that His sheep know His voice. I am accusing no one of anything, but only lamenting at how few (it seems) are hearing the Word of the Lord. We would rather be lost in our own world of make believe. From the middle-aged children screaming at me that my God was powerless because He let their ninety-year-old mother die, to the opinionated illogical teenager who spat at me that what was being said was not to be tolerated because it did not fit into the neat propaganda world deemed as right-think that inhabited her mind, there is a disease of insanity that Christ shatters with the Gospel.

You see, we are in this world which is eternally separated from the Lord. Separated from His goodness and only in His mercy and by His grace, is the offer of His goodness being present made possible. There are those who would rather go to hell thinking themselves right than to even consider that perhaps, just perhaps, Jesus really is the way, truth, and life. I believe this is one of the many passages in Scripture where Jesus is humbly asking us to come to Him. He is telling us to lay down our arguments, our silly thoughts, and to truly repent of ourselves and come to Him just as we are. The God of all the living has invited us into His eternal and never-dying presence that we might partake of true life.

Do not be caught up by this world's constantly changing, yet never changing unreality. Instead,

take up the invitation of your baptism and live into the life which is yours already in Christ. In Him, that is Christ, is all comfort and hope. You see, it does not matter what happens in this world. God already sees all that is going to happen. In spite of what is to us, unknown, God gives us an eternal promise. He says, "I will always be with you." In other words, though heaven and earth pass away – and they will – there is the promise God gives of a new heaven and earth. It is into God's eternity that we are invited. Into God's eternity is where those who believe will go.

So . . . relax and see where the ride of this life will take you. This I do know: at the end, you will see Jesus. Amen.