**Hear Moses and the Prophets!**

**Really! Hear Them!**

**Luke 16:19-31**

Trinity 1 – June 14, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Gospel lesson begins were it begins, but it truly falls in the middle of a time of teaching. Jesus was speaking to a group of people, and some Pharisees were a part of that crowd. He was teaching of the mercy and grace of God in parables. But He had also spoken of the Torah, the Law, in such a way that the Pharisees were publicly put to shame.

Everybody knew these teachers of the Law knew the Law, kept “letter of the Law” outwardly, but doing so to be seen by others. Their hearts were another matter. There was no love or mercy in their hearts, and it was evident.

So, it came about, in the midst of the parables Jesus is telling, and just before our text, Luke records the following:

*The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him [Jesus]. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”* (Luke 16:14-17)

Pharisees had places of honor in the Jewish Sanhedrin, part of the ruling classes. They held places of prominence and power in the church and in society. But their hearts were merciless. They made a show of how better they were than those who were obviously violators of the Law – adulterers, thieves, and such – but their failures in their heart were equally egregious.

It was to address this that Jesus taught what God truly meant in the Law:

Adultery did not just happen when one unzipped their pants, lust in the heart is also adultery.

A .44mag to the head is murder, but so is hatred in the heart.

Scheming to get my neighbor’s boat for way less than it is worth, is the same as stealing it.

So, Jesus had said above, *“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”* People, especially the Pharisees were thinking they were going to get into the Kingdom of God by their adherence to the Law – their good works in keeping the Law – by forcing their way into it. Jesus could not let them continue in the personal misinterpretations and delusions for they would have eternally damning consequences. There is no way to get into God’s kingdom by keeping the Law, it is impossible.

And even though you try to determine your eligibility for the kingdom by you seemingly keeping of the Law outwardly, your hearts betray you. You cannot force your way into the Kingdom of God.

This brings us to our text in which we find two people dying and going to their eternal reward. One is by Abraham’s side, the other is Hades – in excruciating torment – from which he asks that Lazarus warn his family. He believes that if someone returns from the dead to warn his family of what might happen, they might believe.

The response is short, “they have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” In other words, they already have all that they need to avoid eternal torment – it is contained in Moses and the prophets – it is contained in the Scripture.

You have Moses and Prophets. Do you hear them? Seriously, do you hear them? Do you pay heed to Moses and the prophets? Do you listen to God’s Word? Is God’s Word an integral part of our life?

It should be, for it is the message of salvation. It proclaims the love God to those who are loveless. Jesus declared of the Scriptures, that Moses and the Prophets point to Christ. He said to them, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39-40)

In other words, Jesus was saying to them – and to you, “You search the Scriptures because you think they will tell you what you need to do so that by your works you may eternal life. You do not earn eternal life by your works! You think that you could, but you only consider your outward obedience to a few of them. You fail to do the greater works in obedience to the Law. Do you love your neighbors? All of them? What about those you deem are not worth your attention, those who are different, or who you think are beneath you?

Who do you invite to your home, those who will return the favor? What about those who cannot return the favor? What about those whom you are embarrassed to say that you know and are friends with?

You believe that Moses and the Prophets tell you the things you must do to gain eternal life. Scripture is all about Me, about my works for you – my love for you – my self-sacrifice for you. It is about what **I am to accomplish** to earn eternal life **for you**. Believe in me, trust in My work to have life. This is what the Scriptures – what Moses and the Prophets – declare to you.”

It is sadly unfortunate that many – including many who claim to be followers of Jesus –join the rich man in Hades. Many will “enjoy” eternal torment because they have not heeded Moses and the Prophets – they do not trust in God’s Christ.

Christ purchased forgiveness for our sinfulness.

Christ gave up His heavenly realms of glory.

Christ abandoned the finery of His heavenly wealth.

Christ came, as proclaimed by Moses and the prophets, to suffer and die in the lowliest manner to forgive us for our failures to love our neighbor as He has loved us.

This is good news! This is the message of Moses and the Prophets! Hear them! I mean, really hear them!

Those who are already enduring eternal torment will not come back and tell us anything.

Those already laid to rest CANNOT warn us and prepare us for what is coming, the dead do not come and talk to us.

But you do have something proclaiming good news to you – something speaks to you and keeps you from eternal torment. Jesus proclaimed that they had Moses and the Prophets, which pointed ***TO*** Christ. Indeed, it was God who moved those men to speak and write – God speaking through them.

*Today*, you have even more than Moses and the Prophets pointing ***TO*** Christ, you have Christ. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, *In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son*. (Hebr. 1:1-2)

In God’s Word, God’s Spirit is at work building faith. It has always been the Word of Christ, Christ delivered in the Word. When it was Moses and the Prophets, the Word of God had not yet taken on human flesh, but Christ is all Moses and the Prophets proclaimed, and to which they pointed forward.

If people reject the work of the Holy Spirit in the Word of Christ, they are responsible for their own eternal demise. Jesus proclaims, “they have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.”

Today we have a return from exile – it is one of the days of formal confirmation that was supposed to take place on May 17th. Tanya Camacho and Charlie Goss will confirm the faith of their baptism at St. Peter. As part of their brief time of questioning, they will be asked:

Do you hold all the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God? *I do!*

Do you intend to hear the Word and God and receive the Lord’s Supper faithfully? *I do, by the grace of God.*

Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even unto death? *I do, by the grace of God.*

Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church, and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it? *I do, by the grace of God.*

It truly is only by the grace of God that they, your, or I am able to do any of these things! It is only as we Hear the Word of Christ and through the Spirits work in that Word, that any of us continue in the faith. It is why we continue steadfast in that Word. It is why we gather together in that Word, for it is the Word of Christ – Christ Himself present in, and as, that Word.

God has spoken to us by His Son – and is still speaking by His Son. It is the Son who has returned from the dead, and how many ignore Him. How many are not convinced even though He rose from the dead?

It is Christ who comes and speaks to you – your sins are forgiven; your failures to love others as you love yourself, are forgiven.

It is Christ who comes and speaks to you – Take eat; this is my body… Take drink; this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the forgiveness of sin.

It is Christ who comes and speaks to you – it is He who puts His name on you in the benediction and blesses you, just as He promised in the Word of Christ that Moses recorded.

Hear Moses and the Prophet speak – Hear Christ – Hear the One who was foretold, who spoke through them, and who speaks still – coming to bless you with forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.