

On Judica Sunday the Church asks us to face the saddest reality of the fallen world. He came unto His own, His own received Him not. People loved darkness rather than light, rejected forgiveness for the false promise of pleasure. Jesus died for everyone, but not everyone benefits, believes. Talk of love is cheap. Real love means sacrifice not pleasure. In response to Jesus' love, they reject Him, as most people still today.

There is a cost to Christianity. It's not a call to an easy life, power, or prestige. It's a call to sacrifice. **A servant is not greater than his master. Pick up your cross and follow Me,** says Jesus. **They hate, persecuted Me. They will also hate, persecute you.** For you bear His Name, confess His truth. **In this world you will have tribulation, but take heart I have overcome the world.**

Our Lord gathers you here today to confess these words for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent: **Send our your light (the Light of the World) and your truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to your holy hill and to Your dwelling! Then I will go to the Altar of God to God my exceeding joy and I will praise you my God.** The word of the Psalmist ring true on the holy hill outside Jerusalem where the Word made flesh and dwell among us lay down His life on the Altar of a cross for you.

118 years ago this Monday. Men, women establish this congregation, determined to have this blessed Gospel proclaimed in this area, that this Psalm would ring out, right here, still today. **The Light, your truth; let them lead me, bring me to your holy hill, to Your dwelling! Then I will go to the Altar of God, to God my exceeding joy and I will praise you.** This holy hill, this dwelling of the Word made flesh, in the Sacrament, at this Altar of God, our exceeding joy, cry out in praise, what you partake, to receive **my Lord and my God.**

In the Gospel, Jesus hid Himself, for He desires to be known as He says, **when I am lifted up I will draw all men unto myself.** Liturgically, ceremonially we recognize these things and we honor Him in much greater honor we have due to the American flag or have honor guards of our military. We honor our Lord and His work with our highest honor, a greater glory than things of men.

In keeping with the ancient Church, historical Lutheranism, we veiled crucifixes, as He hid Himself. That we see our Lord anew on His resurrection morn. This is also why we raised the book of the holy Gospel in honor as **He is lifted up He will draw all men unto himself.**

It's why, the Church, Lutherans historically, at this holy hill, the Altar of God, we elevate the body and blood given for you, shed for you, elevating them, in confessing the physical dwelling, glory of the Lord, in keeping with the holy scriptures that say **when I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself** and behold He has drawn you here to join Himself to you.

Even you, full of sin, do not deserve the glories of God or heaven or anything good, Just as then and now, the great I AM chose you, not because you stink less than others, nor your good works, nor your faithfulness but out of pity for you the Lord has made you Christian, made you His dear baptized child. He chose you, to work His gifts upon you, endear you, thus that His name would be glorified among the nations.

The glory of men is in numbers, strength of horses, legs of man; now in our military, technology, economic might; but the glory of God is upon those who call upon Him that He would provide, glory as those who put their trust in Him as He deliver you from the darkness, from evil men, even your flesh that opposes Him, delivered even from death.

That He would restore to you the joy that He has with the Father from the foundation of the world, the glory of the Lord then is hidden in His body called the Church. Even this congregation, St. Paul would says of us: **through the Church the manifest glory and**

**wisdom of God shall be made known**; through the Church, the glory of the Lord is known and given here.

But the world looks at you, dear Church, and mocks and hates you for not loving what the world loves. They make fun of you for your dumb antiquated services, hymns and chanting lead by men in irrelevant clothing; you kneel and bow and stand as if you have entered a great space, that's worth so much less than the arenas man builds; you follow such foolishness as pouring water over babies, eating bread, drinking wine, even given wine to children and what has all this mattered. Why is it you keep gathering, the world has better gatherings, more pleasures, less inconvenience, less suffering. That there's no need for you to be burdened or sacrifice or restraint your desires in life. The world can entertain you better, and then you don't listen when we tell you to stop gathering for the sake of man's health, the world can do everything better for you Christian.

Why do you keep gathering here, why do you keep going back to these old antiquated, superstitious ways, and you pay a couple of weak men, to work 1 day-a-week, to sit and study, who don't produce anything, or provide you with anything you can't get on google. Why Church do you continue to gather?

It is because God gathers you to Himself on this holy hill; to make His glory known, through you, the body of Christ among all nations. He gifts wealth of His kingdom that each of you have more treasures than all the earth. Greater are you than the Congress or local councils that decides the laws of this land; greater are you than the President and Judges and the Generals that control men.

For do you not know St. Paul writes the Saints of God will judge the world and this is what your greatness, our judgment looks like, as St. Peter writes, **therefore beloved, make every effort! to add to your faith, virtue. And to virtue, knowledge. Add to your knowledge, self-control. Add to your self-control, wisdom. And to your wisdom, brotherly affection. And brotherly affection in charity. For if you are increasing in these things then you will endure and cannot fall; your calling and election sure clinging to Him who is the love of God made manifest on the cross**, nailed His son to a tree, nailing your sins with Him in our flesh born of the Virgin. So you have nothing to fear, what can man do to you? There is no one to condemn you. You will never see death.

And nothing can separate you from the love of God. You are the holy bride of Christ, the church. To you has been given all of the promises of God that find their 'yes' in Christ Jesus. You'll never see death. For you behold life, life in the Christ; life from the font, life from this Altar; life before one another, as His love in you covers the multitude of sins to an otherwise pathetic, godless people you would be. Beloved love one another for by this all men will know that you are His disciples and **from your dead works, the Spirit working in you**, your good works hold back the forces of darkness and evil and you live out the glory of God to the nations, you are the reason the sun rises and earth spins, the living work of God in you by which the name of God praised.

This congregation of 118 years, as with the Church throughout the ages, should've failed many times over in history. Yet here you are, at this holy hill, before an Altar of God, bask in this joy for you in Him. There is nothing the God of Abraham will not do for you for your good. There is nothing the God of Abraham will not do for the good of your family. He establishes the new covenant in His blood, here and now, the sprinkling of blood for your life, the purification of your flesh; draw life from His chalice, His life. And you have His word, His promise, you will not see death. Not ever. And you will see Him and see Abraham and a blessed reunion awaits with your fathers and mothers in the faith.