

3rd Sunday after Pentecost
“The Good and Gracious Will of God” Mark 3:33-35
June 9, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Second Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 3:33-35.

“33 But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

So far our text.
“The will of God”...

Shortly we will pray together the Lord’s Prayer as we do every Sunday. It is divided into seven petitions. Especially today we give attention to the 3rd petition which is... “Thy will be done”.

Whose will? God’s will. What does this mean when we pray that God’s will be done?

From our catechism we know and maybe memorized Luther’s explanation:

“The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.”

First, Luther reminds us that God’s will is always good and gracious. Second, that God does His will without our prayer, but thirdly, we lift our prayer to God that His will may be done among us also.

How is God’s will done? Luther explains...

“When God breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.”

This good and gracious will Jesus was indeed doing in Capernaum as He preached the Good News of His Kingdom in the synagogue, healed many people who followed Him, and drove out demons. The crowds were so large that Jesus even told His disciples to have a small boat ready for a quick exit so that they would avoid being crushed by the crowds. Indeed, our

Gospel reading says that the crowd was so great that **“that they could not so much as eat bread.”**

Indeed, this again drew the attention of the Pharisees who came all the way from Jerusalem to Capernaum to spread their lies about Jesus.

It was truly a terrible and awful thing that when these church leaders saw the Son of God they saw the devil. Yes, the devil is real. Satan, Beelzebul, the old evil foe, as we sang in “A Mighty Fortress”, used these church leaders to spread lies. The devil overpowered people with demons. He’s been doing that ever since the fall as we heard in our Old Testament reading from Genesis 3.

God’s creation was good and free of all evil. Adam and Eve were holy and sinless when God created them. And God gave them a free will. He commanded them that they could eat freely of all the trees in the garden except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Our Old Testament reading begins after they made the choice to disobey God. They knew they had done wrong, for they hid from God. They were now bound in the devil’s kingdom and their punishment was as God told them – death...temporal and eternal.

But God in great love seeks them out...begins the conversation with them...seeks to hear them admit their sin. And they both did. Their repentance was infected by sin. The man blamed the woman. The woman blamed the serpent. How often we are quick to blame somebody else for the sins which we commit. We’re good at projecting our faults on others to try and deflect the blame.

But, Adam and Eve did admit their sins that they ate. And in that moment, even before God enumerates the consequences of their sins, He shows His good and gracious will to them. For their will is now bound by the devil and unable to free themselves. So is the will every person born into this world for we are born with the sin of Adam and Eve, original sin. All humanity is born into captivity of the devil and no longer has a free will to follow God. “On earth is not his equal” we sang in the first stanza of “A Mighty Fortress”.

But, God has the power to break and hinder the devil’s will. He has the power to storm the stronghold of the devil, bind him and release the captives. How can God do this? The punishment of Adam and Eve and all the world had to be cast onto someone else who was holy and sinless and able to bear the sins of the entire world.

Who is this? So we ask this question in the second stanza of “A Mighty Fortress”.

“But for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected. Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is, Of Sabaoth Lord, And there’s none other God; He holds the field forever.”

Jesus Christ it is! The Lord of the Sabbath as we heard last Sunday! He is the fulfillment of the Sabbath for He fulfilled the Law’s demands. The Sabbath was the shadow and Jesus was the reality of true rest for He forgave the sins of the world!

And that is what God immediately promise Adam and Eve and all the world in the First announcement of the Gospel – the Good News. What is that announcement? Genesis 3:15. God tells the devil his fate.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Her Seed, her descendent would bruise the devil’s head...crush his head...plunder his stronghold...release the prisoners who are in bondage...and give them a new spirit! How? The Seed, Jesus Christ, would have to die on the cross. The devil will bruise His heel. There was no other way.

This is the good and gracious will of God. This is what Jesus means when He tells the people these words.

“27 No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.”

We who could not bind the strong man, are delivered from his power by Jesus, who is stronger. Do you want proof? Look, Jesus drives out the demons from the people.

And then Jesus says the most beautiful words that all sinners, you and me, and all who are listening through our live stream are overjoyed to hear.

“28 “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;”

All sins... not some...but all...all the evil that we have done and said is forgiven by the blood shed on the cross of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice is for all people. This good and gracious will is for all people.

Listen to John 6:40

“40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Jesus said in Matthew 18.

“11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

12 “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? 13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

How can a person believe unless one hears? So God sends us His Holy Spirit who creates faith by the hearing of His Word.

1 Corinthians 12:3

“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus wants no one to call Him accursed and deny Him, but believe and be saved. For if one rejects the good and gracious will of God, His invitation to believe in Jesus as one’s Savior, then one commits the only sin that can never be forgiven – the sin against the Holy Spirit.

“but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”

Jesus warns us and all people to never reject His gracious invitation to believe in Him. For when you do, God rescues you from the devil, brings you into His kingdom of grace and gives you eternal life!

God’s good and gracious will turns a condemned sinner into a child of God by the power of the Gospel! And when that happens, when God creates faith, then He can look at those who believe in Him and say: **“Here are My mother and My brothers!35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”**

Amen.

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)