

# THE 19<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

October 22 2017

Old Test: Gen. 28:10-17

Epistle: Eph. 4:22-28

Gospel: Matt. 9:1-8

## ***Standing...***

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

There's lots of movement in our lessons this morning.  
In the OT, an object is lowered from heaven before Jacob...and in the New,  
a paralyzed man is lowered from the roof before Jesus.  
Let's pray and see what it's all about.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable in  
your sight, O Lord—our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

## ***Sitting***

From our OT lesson, Jacob sees the image of a ladder, or a stairway,  
coming out of heaven to earth.  
It doesn't stop shy of earth but comes all the way down.  
Remarkably angels flank both sides,  
but more amazing is the One who stands at the top.

Nobody ever told me, that climbing is not what this structure is for.  
One cannot climb this staircase.  
Then what's it for?  
It's for the One who stands atop of it to come to us.

English Bible versions can be misleading at times.  
Many of them say the LORD was atop this staircase when He spoke to Jacob.  
In that that He stayed there, remaining distant—far removed.  
But the Hebrew word translated, "atop" is better translated, "beside."  
Which means there is no distance between Jacob and the LORD.  
In fact, the LORD is right there with him.  
This is why Jacob would say,  
"Surely, the LORD is in this place...  
(in that He's beside me) ...and I did not know it."

Again, the staircase is for One to descend.

And descend He does—

“The eternal Son of God became Man and thus entered ‘history.’” Pieper, 73.

So centuries later, Jesus has now scarcely entered into town  
before everyone knows He’s returned and back at home.

(There would be no rest for the Son of Man  
until He found it in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea.)

Within a short period of time, the house is filled.

And no doubt, sitting in front were the religious leaders—  
who always take the best seats.

These religious watch dogs are there to criticize and if possible, condemn.

Meanwhile, four men approach the house bearing their paralyzed friend.

With the crowd so thick—the house so congested,  
one of them decides to open a space on the roof large enough to let their friend  
down into the chamber below where Jesus sat.

The friend’s agree—with I assume, the paralytic giving the thumbs up.

A few moments later their friend now lies before Jesus.

The men from above look down,  
while everyone else looks on.

The expectation was for Jesus to make the man’s legs work again.

I mean, isn’t this is why he was brought to Jesus in the first place?

Of course it is...

But get this: the man’s outward troubles are not his greatest.

His greatest trouble revolves around the sins piled upon his soul.

Those vile and offensive sins that ultimately  
would keep him locked out of heaven...

So for Jesus, it’s the soul first, then the body.

So Jesus says, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”

And immediately, they are.

His sins are sent away from him so completely  
that they shall never be found again,  
to the depth of the sea,

so far that no one can possibly bring them back,  
as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103).

This man is now justified before God,  
 righteous,  
 absolved,  
 forgiven in the present tense by the Son of God Himself—  
 All because Jesus says so.

These words were strange to hear—  
 because the Law knew no such form as an official forgiving of sins.  
 Sure, a leper could be pronounced clean by the priest—but that was rare.  
 A transgressor might present a sin-offering at the Temple,  
 transferring his guilt to it,  
 by laying his hands on its head and owning his fault before God.  
 The blood sprinkled by the priest on the horns of the altar,  
 and towards the Holy of Holies, was an atonement that  
 “covered” his sins from the eyes of Jehovah,  
 and pledged His forgiveness.  
 But announcing forgiveness—  
 No human lips dare pronounce it.  
 Except Jesus.

Our need for forgiveness is not a high priority, is it?  
 I mean, it’s on the list somewhere—but we’ve all got more pressing needs.  
 Things like marital needs, financial needs, emotional needs, physical needs.  
 Our problems are so much bigger—more so than forgiveness.  
 But friend, other problems are not Jesus’ main concern.  
 The main concern Jesus has is what He deals with first,  
 and what He’s already dealt with this morning.  
**EARLY:** You heard Pr. Bruss already say,  
**LATE:** In most of our services, you hear your Pr. say,  
 “I forgive you all your sins.”  
 Which means, you are forgiven,  
 literally, “your sins are loosed.”  
 The chains have fallen off.  
 Your sins are Jesus’ burden now.  
 You can’t have them anymore.  
 They’re His.  
 He dies with them  
 and takes them to His tomb.

The words of absolution you heard/hear are freedom and life.  
And you won't hear them anywhere other than Christ's Church.

You think you'll hear those words at First Baptist? No...

How about at the trendy non-denom church down the street? Ah, no.

Remember your catechesis:

"Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

Everything you need is in the absolving words of Jesus.

But here's the problem—

When Christ absolves you through His called and ordained pastors—

Can you see anything happen?

Is there any visible proof that your sins

are as far from you as the east is from the west?

Any visible proof that God does not condemn you,

that the Law cannot convict you,

that you are pardoned and

your death sentence has been overturned and your case dismissed?

All you have is a promise.

And beloved, this is how God deals with us.

With promises...

Why? Because it causes us to walk by faith  
and not by sight.

Do you remember what Jesus told us concerning Lazarus and the rich man?

Of how they both die, with Lazarus taken to be beside Abraham,

while the rich man is sent to suffer in Hades?

What happened? The rich man calls to Abraham asking for Lazarus to be sent to cool his thirst. The rich man ordered Lazarus around in life, so nothing changes in death. Abraham denies this request saying,

the gulf between the two realms is fixed. Lazarus cannot come to you.

By the way, does the rich man offer any words of repentance? Not one—

Forgiveness isn't high on his list of priorities, either even in torment.

The rich man then asks if Lazarus could be resurrected and go speak to his brothers, warning them not to come to this awful place.

The thought is, if his brothers see Lazarus they'll amend their ways and not be sent where he is.

Abraham's reply is brusque.

He says, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let your brothers hear them."

Hear Moses and the Prophets where?

As they're read in the synagogue.

For they too are to hold it sacred, gladly hear it and learn it.

"Oh no Abraham—you don't know my brothers."

"They don't go to synagogue."

"They need to see something—like a miracle, like a resurrection."

"The Word alone can't do it."

"Promises won't cut it."

To which Abraham responds,

"If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, not even if  
someone were to rise from the dead will they be persuaded."

We are addicted to seeing—

and thereby thinking that seeing will cure all unbelief and doubt.

It won't. Which is why Jesus says so often,

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Though Jesus was already thought of by the religious elites as untrained,  
one who had usurped clerical functions...

Upon making this pronouncement, they thought

Jesus crossed the line into utter blasphemy.

He had intruded on the Divine Right—

equating Himself with the Almighty.

This was scandalous.

When the scribes hear it,

they whisper, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

They shake their heads,

and look at Jesus with their dark gazes.

They knew that a blasphemer was to be put to death by stoning,

his body hung on a tree,

and buried with shame.

Jesus knew they always put the worst construction on all that He said and did.

But remember what Jesus is doing:

first the soul, then the body.

Now look, how do we know that Jesus has the authority over demons?  
He casts them out.

How do we know that Jesus has authority over disease?  
He heals disease.

Then, how do we know that Jesus' word has divine authority and that He alone can forgive sin? Because after He does so, He tells the paralyzed man to rise, and he does so.

The purpose of this miracle is to serve as a visible sign that you might believe that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin.

So instantly, sensibility and power of motion return.  
Atrophied muscles restore, without rehab.  
Strength once more courses through his veins and  
the paralyzed man rises,  
    little by little,  
    with his eyes fixed on his Deliverer,  
    till at last, he stands erect before Him.

First the soul, then the body.

And then, by a look, Jesus motions the man to leave.  
And lifting his mat, he does so.  
Eyes still fixed on His Helper,  
as he made his way backward through the awe-struck crowd.

This was a turning point in the life of Jesus;  
for the accusation of blasphemy, would not die.  
This charge muttered in the hearts of the religious watch dogs  
would end, after a time, at Calvary; and Jesus knew it.

There, Jesus will die on the cross.

And how would the world know for certain that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins?

He got up and walked out of His tomb three days later.

Beloved, your greatest need is the need for forgiveness,  
for it nourishes your faith; your soul.  
To obtain it, you didn't have to cut a hole in the roof to get to Jesus.  
He's accessible to each of you in the waters of Holy Baptism,  
in the words of forgiveness,  
in the Supper of His Body and Blood,  
and in the preached Word.  
And only in His Church does He give these things to you.  
Only in His Church does He deal with your soul in this way.

But it doesn't end there.  
One day, He will deal with your body, just as He's promised.  
He will call it forth from the grave...  
Free of pain,  
Free of sorrow,  
the effects of age  
and sin itself.

First the soul, then the body.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.