

THE 19th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

October 7 2018

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 us pray. 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 heavens open,
with a ladder coming down to earth.
Angels flank both sides as Jacob is then reminded of the three promises
God made to Abraham, Jacob's grandfather.
Jacob seems to be one easily shaken—
regardless, what he is seeing really shakes him.

Fast-forward to when Jesus is introduced to Nathaniel,
one who would become His disciple—
Nathaniel's the one who scenically asks,
"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
When he meets Jesus though,
it's like Nathaniel was just reading or thinking about Jacob's ladder,
because out of the blue Jesus tells him...
*"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened,
and the angels of God ascending and descending on
the Son of Man"* (John 1:51).
Jesus informs Nathaniel that the ladder Jacob saw,
was in fact Jesus—which shakes him up too.

Now, fast-forward once again.

Jesus has scarcely entered into town
before everyone knows.

(There would be no rest for the Son of Man
until He found it in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea,
and even then, it wouldn't last very long.)

Within a short period of time, the house He's in is filled.
And no doubt, sitting right in the front were the religious leaders—
those who always take the best seats.

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

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

With the crowd so thick—the house so congested,
a decision is made to open a space on the roof large enough to let their friend
down into the chamber below—right where Jesus sat.

The others agree—with I assume, the paralytic giving the thumbs up.

This act took faith.

Because you certainly don't go through all this trouble to get your friend
close to Jesus because you think Him to be unmerciful, unkind, or unable to save.

Mission accomplished.

Their friend now lies before Jesus,
as they look down from the roof,
and everyone else looks on.

The expectation was for Jesus to make the man's legs work again—to get him to walk!
But, the man's outward trouble is 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, the soul must be dealt with first,
then the body.

This paralytic is the perfect symbol of the inability of sinners to help themselves.

He can't move a muscle—all he can do is receive what Jesus wants to give him.

With that, Jesus says, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

And immediately, they are—with a word.

You know, all churches have a liturgy—
 some more elaborate than others—nevertheless, there's always a liturgy.
 In our liturgy, specifically Divine Service Setting 3, 4 and 5, we have...
 "Our help is in the name of the Lord,"
 With the response, "**who made heaven and earth.**"
 "I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
 "**And you forgave the iniquity of my sin.**"

Why would a verse about God making heaven and earth
 be included in a section having to do with confession?
 Because, how did God make heaven and earth? By the power of His word...
 And if He can make heaven and earth with the power of His word,
 what can He do with your sins?
 By the power of His word,
 He can cast them so far that they'll never be found again...
 so far that no one can possibly bring them back,
 as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103).

That is precisely what Jesus does for this paralyzed sinner laying before Him.
 This one who can do nothing to help himself...
 As a result, He is now justified before God,
 righteous,
 absolved,
 forgiven in the present tense by the Son of God Himself—
 All because Jesus says so.

To the ears of the Pharisees, these were strange words.
 The Law knew no such form as an official forgiving of sins,
 of someone pronouncing forgiveness—
 No human lips dare do that.
 Except Jesus.

Did this authority to forgive sins ascend to heaven with Jesus after His resurrection?
 Absolutely not.
 The risen Lord Christ,
 the King of the Universe,
 left that authority on earth—
 and you've already received it this morning.
 You heard Pr. Bruss say,
 in the stead of Christ and by His command,

"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' now and
 you can't have them anymore.
 He dies with them
 and takes them to His tomb.

The Catechism teaches:

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

Sure—the absolution sounded like Pr. Bruss—but it was Jesus,
 delivering what only Jesus can deliver.

That which you are ashamed of: forgiven.

That regret: forgiven.

All of it. Nothing remains.

Jesus' word of Absolution is freedom—it's life.

And you won't hear it anywhere other than Christ's Church.

You will not hear words of Absolution at First Baptist Church
 nor will you hear them at the hip, trendy non-denominational church.

You won't hear an absolution pronounced there
 because they don't believe it.

Yes—the word Bible might even be included in their name,
 but there's an essential part they do not believe.

They do not believe Jesus left His authority
 on earth to forgive sins, through the lips of another.
 In order to get that, one has to feel it in their heart.

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 now cast as far from you as the east is from the west?

Is there any visible proof that God does not condemn you,
 that the Law cannot convict you,

that you are pardoned and your case dismissed?

No...

All you have is a word—a promise.

It's how God deals with us.

Why? Because we are to walk by faith
and not by sight—and certainly

not walk by what we feel in our hearts.

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

When Jesus made this pronouncement to this man, they thought
He crossed the line into blasphemy.

He had intruded on the Divine Right—
equating Himself with the Almighty.

They've never been more right.

In saying this, Jesus is claiming to be God.

He's claiming to be the One to whom all flesh must give an answer...
the One before whom every knee must bow.
the One who can open the doors of heaven,
and who can sentence sinners to hell.

To them, this was scandalous.

But to us, it's Jacob's ladder.

Christ coming to us, giving a sinner like you access to God,
through the forgiveness of sins.

They ask, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

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 Jesus has authority over disease?

He heals disease.

How do we know Jesus has control over nature?

He settles it.

Then, how do we know that Jesus alone can forgive sin?

Because after He forgives the paralyzed man Jesus tells him to rise, and he does.

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

Instantly, sensibility and power of motion return.

Atrophied muscles restore, without rehab.

Strength once again courses through his veins and
the paralyzed man rises,

little by little,

with his eyes fixed on his Deliverer,

till at last, he stands up straight before Him.

First the soul, then the body.

And then, by a look, Jesus motions the man to leave.

Lifting his mat, he does.

Eyes still fixed upon His Helper,

as he makes his way through the awe-struck crowd.

This was a turning point in the life of Jesus;

for this accusation of blasphemy, would not die.

This charge muttered in the hearts of the religious watch dogs
would only end at Calvary; and Jesus knew it.

There, Jesus will die on the cross—

for the once paralyzed man,

for his friends who lowered him down,

for the Pharisees who hated Him,

and for you.

Beloved, your greatest need is forgiveness.

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 word of Absolution,

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.

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—which is why we confess,

I believe in the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body and

the life everlasting...

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.