

Luke 10.21-37
13th Sunday after Trinity
6 September 2020
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

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Beloved in the Lord: grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Hear again these words of the Gospel: "I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Oremus: haec, pater sancte, verba tua sunt, etc.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder. You've all heard that. And many of you've experienced it.

That's what Jesus is talking about when He says, "I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you and did not hear it." Absence made the heart grow fond!

There sat stunned Adam—and the woman—, reeling in their own sin. Reeling in the knowledge that their sin had not only ruined their own lives, had not only ruined the life of every single one of their descendants, but had even closed the way to eternal life. They could have nothing but sorrow and disgust at themselves as they looked at their dear Cain and Abel and the misery they had inflicted upon them; nothing but crushing grief when their own sin caused Cain to kill his brother with his own two hands. Everywhere nothing but ruin and disaster and misery. Dust they had been. As futile as dust their own life. And to nothing but dust would they return. Lost and condemned forever.

But in the midst of that horror of their own sin came a promise: the woman's Offspring would crush the head of the deceiver serpent. Sin would be forgiven. Death would be swallowed up in death. The way to paradise re-opened.

Oh, they couldn't wait! The end of it all! One who comes to forgive sins. To crush the serpent's slimy head. To breathe life into their dust once again!

And in his confidence in God's will and promise to do it. In his hope to be done with this disaster of a situation that he could never fix. In his longing and zeal to see that day Adam for the first time called the name of the woman the Lord had given him. And he called her הוה (*Hāwáh*). "Life." Nothing ironic there. No passive-aggressive reminder that she had actually brought death by her desire for the fruit. But an aching longing for God to fulfill His Word and restore life through Him whose defeat by Satan was to be the defeat of Satan.

But he did not see what he longed to see.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

In fact, you could say the entire Old Testament is a history written on that theme. In longing for the Lord to send His Redeemer by whose death life would be restored, Abraham trudged up Mt. Moriah with Isaac. But he did not see what he longed to see. In longing for the once-for-all blood of the Son of God, the pious ancients gathered around blood-spattered altar and blood-strewn ark. But they did not see it, either. Longing for that day, King David allowed the condemning finger of the raging prophet to be thrust in his face. For God would send the Sin-Forgiver whose life and death would mend the shambles

David had made of his own life and his children's and his kingdom's. But neither did he see it. In longing confidence and confident longing that the Lord would send Him whose feet would tread in victory upon the coals of hell, the three young men allowed themselves to be thrown into the fiery furnace. They did not see it. In zeal for the Lord to fulfill His promise pious Simeon returned day in and day out to the temple. And he did see it.

He knew it the moment they walked in the temple, that mother and adoptive father, with a little child and a couple of turtledoves in hand.

And though He was not much to look at—no royal retinue. Though he was an unremarkable child—no cute little Prince George was he. Though His mother and adoptive father hailing from the backwater town of Nazareth were to the cosmopolitan Jerusalemite as good as a couple of stinking Samaritans—no matter any of that, finally the day had come. Finally Simeon's eyes beheld what prophets and kings longed to see. And finally Simeon's ears heard what they desired to hear.

And Simeon took that child and held Him close. For though no better than a Samaritan, He was the Good Samaritan. Though unable to put a bottle to His own mouth, His shed blood was oil poured on the wounds of sin. Though unable to control His little hands, by His stripes He bound up those wounds and healed them. Though His hands had no skill, the Inn of the holy Church was His work, and He its chief cornerstone. Though penniless, He purchased His own not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death.

That's what prophets and kings longed to see, longed to hear. His absence made their hearts grow fonder.

But now that He's come, what's happened to that fondness? Where did it go? How could a pious Jew, a descendant of longing Adam and longing Abraham and longing David, whose longing uncles had been tossed into the fiery furnace in the hope of this Sin-Forgiver—how, when He's no longer longed-for but here, could he return to his own vomit like a dog? "What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?" How could he desire to purchase eternal life on his own deserts, when it can only be purchased by the blood of the Son of God? How could he make what can only be a sweet gift into the paltry earnings of his bitter toil in the salt mine of his sin-filled life?

More to the point—how could you?

If you don't come streaming into the Lord's house because here you see and hear what the three men in the fiery furnace longed for, surely you'd do it because David longed to see and hear what's here—the Lord Jesus Himself, in His Word and Sacrament. Because there's no way on God's green earth you can pluck the sliver of sin out of David's eye while the log's still stuck in your own. And if you don't come streaming into the Lord's house to see and hear what David longed to, then surely you'd do it because Adam longed to see and hear it, whose sin you still bear. And if not because of Adam's longing, then your own. For even 6,000 years after the fact, it's not just Adam's life that's in ruins, but yours. Even 6,000 years after the fact, death has not been overcome, murder and murderous, jealous hatred has not ceased, and marital infidelity has not been replaced by increasingly more intact families. Even 6,000 years after the fact, the longings of your own heart have sought their satisfaction not in God, but in the things of this world—in your reputation, your possessions, your leisure time, and whatever else the world has to offer.

You see, the man lying there half-dead on the side of the road is Adam and Abraham and David and the three young men and Simeon. It's the smart-aleck Jew who wants to earn heaven. And it's you.

Estranged from God you're powerless to heal yourself. Dead in trespasses and sins, you can't revive yourself.

You can't even know what you'd long for then.

But what if Someone would just come down into your miserable valley of death and be with you and hover over your half-dead body? What if Someone would see you and be moved by an eternal pity and care enough to disinfect your wounds of all shame and guilt bind you up and heal you and forgive you all your sins? What if Someone would snatch you out of that hellish place of danger and take you to the heavenly safe house of His Church? And what if Someone would pay by His own blood and death to have you bathed and fed?

Would you long for that? That's what Adam and Abraham and David and Simeon longed for. And now He has come.

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, and the ears that hear what you hear!

Amen.

pax domini, etc.

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