

# TRINITY 19

October 10 2021 • Pr. D.M. Kerns

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.

**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***

Your run-of-the-mill American Evangelical Church does not follow the Church Year, wherein what starts for us in Advent culminates with a focus upon the Last Day. This series takes us 52 weeks to cover before we start all over again.

One might sum up the first part of the Church Year as following the Life of Christ—birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension...

Then when everything turns green, after Trinity Sunday, we focus on the teachings of Christ.

Green indicates growth—and that's what we're all after.

Yet, the American Evangelical Church does not operate like this.

Which is fine...

I guess...

Instead, what they've done is create their own Church Year—a calendar that tends to follow the pattern of the American culture.

For example, in January, the focus is on stewardship—

Why? Because everyone after Christmas is broke, and in debt.

The Pastor here is seen as an expert financial planner—with all his financial ducks in a row.

In February, the focus is on relationships—because it's February!

And that only means one thing...Valentine's Day.

Now the Pastor is a match-maker, or a relationship expert.

In March, Easter gets an honorable mention—which is noble.

But March Madness is in full swing—and that gets a lot of attention.  
 The focus at church during this time is about  
 staying in the game,  
 playing through,  
 persevering in the Christian life.

I could go on, but you get the point.

I mention this because our Gospel lesson makes an appearance  
 within most of your run-of-the-mill American Evangelical churches,  
 during their pseudo-Church Calendar.  
 Every year, at some point, this text is turned to and preached,  
 which you'd think would be great.  
 However, you would not believe  
 where they place the emphasis.

To them, this text is all about having and being  
 a good friend.

Friends, like the guys depicted  
 on the front cover of your bulletin—  
 willing to do whatever it takes  
 to get their friend before Jesus.  
 The message is,  
 "Be like them..."

Now, look, there's a grain of truth in that message—just a smidge.

Because, we bring our children to the font.

We bring them and others to the Divine Service.

We invite our neighbors and co-workers and we pray for them.

As another example, think of all the work LWML does for others.

But to take this text and emphasize *friendship*  
 over and above the forgiveness of sins?

Or, to take this text and completely miss  
 what it says of Jesus...?

Talk about missing the forest  
 for the trees.

So, let's not be like them and focus on what they focus upon—  
 let's get it right.

In the Nicene Creed, that which we just confessed, we publicly asserted our belief  
 that God is the maker of all things, both visible and invisible.

In the Second Article of the Creed,  
 we confessed that God came down from heaven,  
 was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
 born of the Virgin Mary and was made Man.

We confessed precisely what St. Matthew testifies in this text, namely,  
 that God made the visible and the invisible,  
 and that God became Man.

These things are true.

And with the healing of the paralytic,

Jesus commands both.

Both the visible and the invisible obey Him.

Thus, Jesus is a Man

who only does what God can do.

First, Jesus addresses the invisible.

This man's paralysis—that which was extremely visible...

was not his greatest trouble—

though people may have thought so.

This man's greatest trouble revolved around the sins piled upon his soul.

St. Paul writes of this sinfulness,

affecting us just as much as it did the paralyzed man.

Futility of mind,

darkened understanding,

alienation from God,

ignorance,

blindness of heart,

conscience dulled,

given over to lewdness,

working uncleanness,

greediness.

It's an ugly list, and we are guilty of it.

The paralytic man was guilty of sin.

As were the men who carried him  
 to Jesus.

But—the Lord saw their faith.

Jesus saw the sin, which was invisible. Moreover, He saw their faith,  
which was invisible as well.

Thus, Jesus determined to give the healing that faith most desires,  
the forgiveness of sins.

So, with a Word, He proclaims the paralytic's sins forgiven,  
something only God can do.

His was a Divine action—surpassing man's ability,  
and yet the Man Christ does it,  
exercising power over the invisible,  
solely by His Word.

You know, 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 His performative Word...  
meaning His Word does what He says it will do. "Let there be light."

"And there was light."

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 they'll never be found again...  
so far no one can possibly bring them back,  
as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103).

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—because He wants you to receive it,  
which you already have this morning.

You heard me 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 now Jesus' and

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

Sure—the absolution sounded like a Southern boy—but it was Jesus,  
 delivering what only Jesus can deliver, and doing only what Jesus can do.  
 He addresses what's invisible to you, but visible to Him.

So, 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 that absolution anywhere  
 other than Christ's Church.

This is what Jesus does for the paralyzed man,  
 it's what Jesus does for you.

But here's the hiccup in the giddy up—

When Christ absolves you through His called and ordained pastors—  
 do 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?

No...

All you have is a word—a promise.

This is how God deals with us.

Why? Because here, we walk by faith  
 and not by sight—which means  
 we live by trusting His promises.

When Jesus made this pronouncement to the man,  
 the religious watchdogs thought He'd crossed the line into blasphemy.  
 That He intruded on Divine Right—equating Himself with the Almighty.

Because in saying this, Jesus is claiming to be God.

Claiming to be the One to whom all flesh  
 must give an answer...

Claiming to be the One before whom  
 every knee must bow...

Claiming to be the One who can open  
 the doors of heaven, and the One who can  
 sentence sinners to hell.

To them, this was scandalous—they couldn't see it.  
 In response to their silent accusations,  
 the Lord works another miracle—this time commanding the visible.  
 He tells the paralyzed man to rise.

And so, instantly—sensitivity and power of motion return.  
 Atrophied muscles restore.  
 Strength once again courses through this man's veins and  
 the paralyzed man rises,  
 little by little,  
 with his eyes fixed on his Deliverer—  
 and everyone else's eyes fixed on him.  
 At last, he stands up straight before Jesus.  
 Jesus who commands the invisible and the visible.  
 Jesus who is the God that came down from heaven  
 and was incarnate  
 by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary.  
 Jesus who grants the forgiveness of sins  
 to all who believe in Him.

Jesus attaches a visible, external sign...  
 to an invisible miracle.  
 The physical healing of paralysis—the visible—  
 proved that the forgiveness of sins—the invisible—had indeed taken place.  
 Thus, the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,  
 and wants to give that to you just as willingly,  
 just as freely,  
 just as quickly as He gave it to the man placed before Him.

Friends?

You're going to tell me this text is about having and being a good friend?  
 Are you insane?!

Beloved, your greatest need is not having or being a good friend. It's forgiveness.  
 And to obtain this forgiveness, you don't have to cut a hole in the roof to get to Jesus.  
 He's accessible to each one of you  
 in the waters of Holy Baptism,  
 in the word of Absolution, in the preaching of His Word,  
 and in the Supper of His Body and Blood—get that—again  
 He attaches visible, external signs—bread and wine—so that you

know that you receive Christ—  
 and with that eating and drinking your sins are forgiven.  
 And only in His Church  
 does He give these things to you.  
 Only in His Church does He deal  
 with your soul—  
 that which is invisible.

But it doesn't end there...

One day, He will deal with your body too—He'll deal with the visible,  
 just as He's promised.

He will call it forth from the grave, and everyone will see.

You will stand just as strong—even stronger—  
 than this previously paralytic man.

This is why we confess in the Apostles' Creed,  
 I believe in the forgiveness of sins,  
 the resurrection of the body and  
 the life everlasting...

So be of good cheer, dear Christian, your sins are forgiven you.

The Lord that commands the visible and the invisible has seen your faith.

And He grants you the healing that avails unto all eternity.

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.