

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. Peace be upon Israel!”

Some things never change and are always certain. Benjamin Franklin said in a famous quote, “Our new Constitution is now established, everything seems to promise it will be durable; but, in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes.” He’s not wrong, at least in terms of life in this world. When you look at history there are things, to be sure, that do change. I asked a woman once at her 100-year-old birthday party what stood out most in her life as she had seen and experienced so many things. Her answer was, “cell phones.”

Yet, even as there are so many changes and so many new experiences, inventions, and everything in between some things never change and are always certain. People are one of these things and God is the other. The state and actions of the former calls you to repentance and the state and actions of the latter calls and causes you to rejoice.

God’s people never change. Since the fall into sin, God’s people are sinful from the time of their conceptions in their mothers’ wombs. Scripture is clear on this and repeats it often. David confessed in Psalm 51, “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Again, in Romans 5, among countless other places, St. Paul writes, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.” From the time of Adam and Eve and their fall in the Garden of Eden, all are sinful and act out this sinful condition. Some things never change.

The Old Testament reading shows this vividly in the account from Exodus 16. The people are hungry. They’ve left Egypt and now they want some food. So, like a child who gets upset when he can’t have his eighth package of fruit snacks after leaving the house five minutes ago, this happened. “And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, ‘Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’”

Now think about this for a minute and what’s going on in this situation. Here are the people and what were they in Egypt? They were slaves. They were far from living life to the fullest. God promised them a land of their own and in which they would be free. He promised them a land to dwell which would be “flowing with milk and honey.” And to add on to all of that, what happened a few chapters earlier? They saw with their own two eyes God literally part water in two and create a path for them to walk through it as on dry land. All of that happened. All of that they experienced. Yet they doubted God’s word. They doubted his faithfulness to those promises he had made to them. They sinned against the Lord. Some things never change.

Fast forward to the Epistle reading and St. Paul refers you back to an event prior to the Exodus when Abraham doubted the Lord’s promises. In Genesis 15, Moses recorded by divine inspiration the conversation between the Lord and, at that time, Abram. “And Abram said, ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.’ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: ‘This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.’ And he brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”

Yet what did Abram do? Well, at the advice of his wife, Sarai, in the very next chapter, Genesis 16, it is written, “Sarai said to Abram, ‘Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived.” Abram and Sarai, later Sarah, took matters into their own hands (or other members) and doubted God’s promises and his faithfulness to those promises. Some things never change.

That brings you to the Gospel reading from John 6. Right before the appointed reading today begins, John 5 ends with Jesus rebuking the Jews who wanted to kill Jesus earlier in that chapter as Jesus was teaching them how he is God. The chapter, John 5, ends with these words of Jesus, “But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

Now, in the Gospel reading today from John 6, a large crowd was following Jesus because he was working miracles on the sick. St. John goes on to write, “Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.’ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?’” The disciples had seen Jesus work the miracles, they heard him preach, and now they are questioning how these people will be able to eat even as Jesus is right before them, the one who proclaimed not long before how he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and he is God himself.” Some things never change.

Here you are right now. You are no different in so far as you are a sinner just like the people in these readings today. Some things never change. You were conceived and born into sin and in your life, you have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed by what you have done and what you have left undone. You have the promises of God set before you in your life as a baptized child of God that your sin has been forgiven, you have been rescued from death, and the devil and you have eternal salvation as the words and promises of God declare. Last week in the Gospel reading, Jesus said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” You have been given to know the things of the Kingdom of God. You have been called to keep God’s word. God has warned you of the dangers of sin, that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour you. You have been instructed in the Ten Commandments and exhorted to live a life worthy of your calling as a baptized child of God. You have been rebuked to turn from your sinful ways. You have heard God’s word and seen these people in the readings today and their doubt of God’s word and doubting that God would be faithful.

So where are you and who are you? Some things never change. You are no different than the people in these readings when it comes to your sin. Yet this is where you see some things never change and God says to you, “Repent.” He calls you to take this all to heart this morning and examine your life. See what God teaches you. See where you have fallen short. See where you have doubted God’s word. See where you have doubted that he would be always faithful to you, in all circumstances, and in all places. See where you have not changed from sin when you have turned your eyes away from Christ and to yourself. See where you have listened to the voices around you which may not be crying out in hunger but crying out for you to doubt your faith and doubt your Lord’s word all in the name of whatever is the buzz word of the day and the wind of the fallen culture

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around you. See where you are in danger of falling off the cliff into despair and destruction as sin always does and see that it never changes when you continue that path, it will end in condemnation and death. Repent.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, listen again to the Collect of the Day you prayed a few minutes ago. “Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”

Some things never change and when it comes to your Lord and what he has done for you in Christ, that’s a reason to rejoice this day. The Father knows you and he has shown you mercy on account of the Son. Look again at all these readings and see now what God does even as his people sin against him.

In the Old Testament reading God gave the people food to eat. In the Epistle reading, St. Paul calls to remembrance that God fulfilled his promises to Abraham, he gave him Isaac and many heirs through the promise, and now you are children of the promise. Jesus worked a miracle in the Gospel reading feeding the people in that place. He fed his people just as he fed them so many years before in the wilderness after they left Egypt and continued to do so throughout those forty years wandering in the dessert. Some things never change, and thanks be to God that God’s mercy in Christ is not temporary but endures forever and he abounds in steadfast love.

The Tract before the Gospel reading today beautifully proclaims from Psalm 125, “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. Peace be upon Israel!” Even as God’s mercy in Christ for you never changes, he guards and keeps you. Those who trust in him, you, cannot be moved because fixing your eyes on Christ you have forgiveness, life, and salvation. This is the faith you have been given and this is the faith your Lord preserves you in through his word and sacraments. God doesn’t treat you as you deserve rather, he has, and he will always treat you on account of Christ and his life, death, and resurrection for you. That’s the righteousness you have, the righteousness of faith. That’s the righteousness that avail before God and will never change.

Everything in your life is lived then knowing that some things never change. What is this? “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” You will not be moved Mt. Zion, dear people of God. Rejoice in Christ who has redeemed you. When sin seeks to have its way in your life don’t go running back into slavery and death, repent and turn to Christ who forgives you and the new life you have in him. When the sinful, fallen world tries to tempt you to go away from Christ, his church, and his word, remind it that it will one day end, but the church and the word of the Lord will endure forever and not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. Don’t listen to lies and buy into them however appealing and popular they may be, hold fast, instead to the truth, the unchanging truth. When death stares at you and draws near face it as the defeated enemy for some things never change and your Lord is the Resurrection and the Life, and you have life in him, and this will not change even as you die, you will live forever.

This Sunday in Lent is a bit of a respite as the church moves closer toward Holy Week. Just as the people were fed in the wilderness during the time of Moses and Jesus fed five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish, taste, and see that the Lord is good, and his mercy endures forever. Hear his word and feast at his Supper today with eyes of what is to come, what will never change. Holy Week is on the horizon. God shows you mercy and takes care of you in body and soul. The Lord is yours and you are his. He takes care of you in all circumstances even as he took care of his people since the world began. The same God who rained down manna and quail is the same God who worked the miracle in John 6. This God is who has redeemed you. He knows

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you and has called you by name in the waters of Holy Baptism. He gives you your daily bread. He hears and answers your prayers. He guards, keeps, and upholds you with his righteous right hand. He forgives you and shows you mercy. He points you to a glory to come.

The cross is drawing closer and so is the glorious Easter morning. Live as one who knows nothing changes for one who belongs to Jesus. Be steadfast and immovable. Baptized into Christ see all of this and know what you have even now. You are forgiven. You have life. Rejoice and be glad that you are here in this house of the Lord and know you will be raised from the dead and dwell in his house in the new heavens and earth. Some things never change and regarding your Lord, thanks be to God for him and his mercy and steadfast love which endure forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.