

Sermon for The 7th Sunday after Pentecost

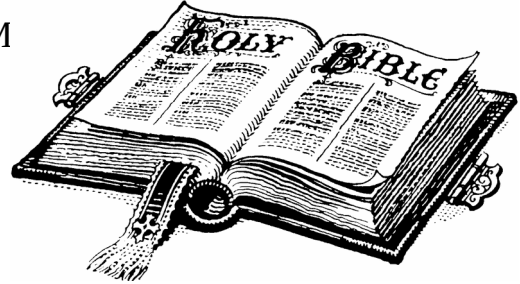
Date: August 5, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, M

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1–5

Epistle Reading: Romans 9:1–13

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:13–21



Sermon Text: Isaiah 55:1-7

Sermon Title: Pardoned

Introit: Psalm 105:39–43; antiphon: v. 1

Hymns:

LSB 763 – When Peace, like a River

LSB 652 – Father, We Thank Thee

LSB 818 – In Thee Is Gladness

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151



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Text: Isaiah 55:1–5

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.”

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Grace, peace, and mercy to you always in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is a tradition in our country that occurs at the end of most every presidential term. It is the tradition of the presidential pardon. If you are accused of a crime, go to trial, and are convicted, and exhaust all the appeals processes, then it is done. You are guilty, and there is no escaping the punishment that has been assigned to you. Unless...

Unless the governor of your state, or the president of the nation, chooses to pardon you. Historically there have been some questionable pardons at times. Presidents and governors have, on occasion, handed out pardons to people who clearly should be serving their punishment. People who are clearly guilty, but just happen to be a friend with the right person, and so they get off Scott free.

When these events occur it usually drums up all kinds of political rancor, but most of it comes to nothing because the pardons tend to fall at the very end of the term, after elections have already decided who is in and who is out. Still, what about those people who get to go free? They committed a crime. They were tried, and convicted, and now after all the work, money, and effort to put them away for what they did, they are set free because one person just decided to let them go. That would appear to be unfair. Punishment should fit the crime, and those who do the crime should have to pay the punishment. This kind of stuff gets our dander up. We call the politicians corrupt and immoral. We exhale in exasperation and unbelief that this world is so unfair.

We like it when things are fair; when life treats people the way they should be treated. Bad people have bad things happen to them, good people have good things happen to them. We like it when hard working people are rewarded for their hard work, when diligence and persistence come to success and wealth. Especially when it is the little guy, the underdog, who wins it big through his own ingenuity and effort.

We have all seen, in too many ways that free money does little to truly help people over the long term. There is a sense in America of personal effort. Stereotypically our society looks down on people who spend years and years on welfare. We like to believe that people should pull their own weight.

Now I'm not here to discuss the politics of current entitlement systems in America. I'd like to explore a somewhat larger welfare program. One that is, by anybody's measure, profoundly unfair. This program hands out uncountable quantities of free stuff. People from all walk of life leach off of this system

everyday, at an expense that no country can possibly sustain. Even our great nation, with all of its wealth, resources, and riches cannot maintain this program.

It hands out free food, free cloths, and free houses. The food is not the stuff you get at a local food shelf. This entitlement program hands out high-end meals prepared by the best in the arts of food preparation. The clothing is not second-hand hand-me-downs. It is brand new, designer, custom made attire. ...and the homes they hand out are just over the top. It is ridiculous to give people who are accustomed to living in poverty a home like this. They have no idea how to care for it or maintain it. You know very well, if left to their own efforts, the place will be looking ragged and rundown in no time. If that was not enough, they hand out free wine. This program is just plain foolishness.

This kind of stuff, I'm sure you would agree with me, is not sustainable, and should not be allowed to continue. People have started petitions to stop this program. They have even gone to court to stop the nonsense. It is just foolishness to keep a program like this going. I would ask all of you here today to consider whether you would join the very large, and ever growing, group of people who would like to see this lavish wastefulness brought to an end. People should pay their own way. A person's raise should become effective when they are. Lazy losers should learn to starve a little. A little hunger is a good motivator to get people to work. Right?!

Before you answer... I should tell you who is running this program. It's not the Republicans. It's not the Democrats either. The truth is we read about it in Isaiah chapter 55. You heard these words:

Whoever is thirsty, come to the water! Whoever has no money come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk. You don't have to pay; it's free! Why do you spend money on what cannot nourish you, and your wages on what does not satisfy you? Listen carefully to me: Eat what is good, and enjoy the best foods.¹

You see it's you. You are the criminal that has been pardoned. You were tried and sentenced to eternity in a prison called Hell. You had nothing, and could do nothing, to take care of yourself. You were a poor, destitute indigent. Your cloths were smelly and tattered. You were in a nowhere life, with no way out, and it was all your own fault. You had been permanently labeled a sinner.

1 Isaiah 55:1-2

Now God our Father does not just pardon people. He expects debts to be paid, and work to be done. The problem is the debt is far, far, far too great, the work that needs to be done to dig you out of the hole you've gotten yourself into is far too much. You'll never do it even if you had an eternity to try. That is the reason this entitlement program was started.

It was started to get you on a path, a narrow path,² that will ultimately leads you to a better life. Jesus Christ the very Son of the Father was sent to pay your debt. What did you do to earn His favor? What did you do to earn His attention? Nothing. Yet Isaiah writes about Him:

He bore our grief. He carried our sorrows.
He was pierced through for our transgressions.³

Jesus was crushed for all of your sins. By His scourging, by His bleeding and suffering, you can now be totally forgiven and healed from all your sins, through repentance, set free from the prison, and given blessings and riches unmeasurable.

“All of us,” Isaiah reminds us, “like sheep have gone astray.”⁴ We have sinned terribly against God. Each of us has turned away from the truths and promises of God. Yet in His mercy, our Lord has dumped all of our sins on Jesus, and exacted the necessary and due punishment on Him.

Isaiah also explains when God the Father saw the suffering of Jesus, all the blood which Jesus paid for your sins and failures, when He saw that, it satisfied God's demand of righteousness and holiness on your part. The bloody suffering, the innocent death, and the victorious resurrection of Jesus has gained a pardon for you. A very undeserved pardon for you.

People will be critical of what God has done for you. People will question what God has done for you. People will doubt what God has done for you. They will try to prevent you from telling others about it. They will try to pull it from history books and schools. They will try to erase it from the minds of children, but no one can take away the truth. The truth is you have a pardon which Jesus Christ has earned for you. The greatest joy found in Scripture is that, “God has not dealt with us as our sins require.”⁵

My message to you is, instead of focusing on questionable political presidential pardons, fix your thoughts on the pardon and the hope God is now offering you in the sin-cleansing blood of the Jesus Christ our Lord, and repent. Even in your

2 Matthew 7:13-14

3 Isaiah 53:4-5

4 Isaiah 53:6

5 Psalm 103:10

darkest hour, in your most discouraging moments, when the whole world is crashing in around you, the gracious and pardoning power of God will uplift you and give you a new start and a reason to live.

Some of you might remember the name Darryl Strawberry. Back in the late 90's he was the star of the New York Yankees. A baseball hero. Many people looked up to him. Kids collected his baseball cards, and wanted his autograph. The problem was Darryl "Big Hank" Strawberry was not all he appeared to be. Though he looked great, the truth is he was entangled in a life of drugs and crime. His second wife had filed for divorce. Adding to his problems he was also diagnosed with cancer. So his life and his body were quickly falling apart. Mostly due to his own actions, and his own choices.

The New York Times recorded an arrest and court appearance like this:

"New York Yankees' slugger Darryl Strawberry, under double assault from fierce drug addiction, and cancer, stood in shackles before a judge and said, 'For me, life hasn't been worth living. That's the honest truth Judge,' he said, 'I want to die.'"

Life can beat us up and leave us laying in the street. When your heart is heavy, and your soul is burdened with feelings of failure and inadequacy, you need a special divine lift. You need the powerful and uplifting promises of your merciful heavenly Father who has pardoned you and set you free.

There is only one place we can ultimately turn to find real rest and relief. Darryl Strawberry was brought to His knees, before God, in that place. That place where the only thing you have left to cling to is God's love, God's care, God grace and mercy. You see the best way to build a new future is first be assured by God Himself that, in His sight, your past is past. You can start over because of His forgiveness and His perfect pardon. There is ultimately no where else to go.

Today people in every part of the country more and more are going from church to church trying to find one that meets their needs. Perhaps we need to ask the question, "What is the perfect church? What should it be like?" If it is true, as the Bible teaches, that "all of us have gone astray each his own way,"⁶ "There is no man that does not sin,"⁷ and, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,"⁸ the most important thing to look for in trying to find a church that meets

6 Isaiah 53:6

7 1 Kings 8:46

8 Romans 3:23

ones needs is find a church where they are reminded in no uncertain terms that we are “by nature sinful and unclean.” Daily falling short of what God expects.

In this same ideal church people must hear regularly that in Jesus Christ, God the Father has arranged for a perfect pardon for everyone in the sin-cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul says it like this, “In Jesus we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of God’s grace.”⁹”

We need to spend more time dwelling on, and focusing on, the Biblical teaching of when and how God pardons us. He is not just changing His mind regarding your guilt. God is not saying, “Oh, poor baby, I feel so sorry for you!” God does not make light of His salvation plan for you and what it cost His Son. God cannot overlook the horrible cost for your sins. The terrible price for your failures in life had to be paid. When Jesus Christ went willingly to die on the cross His blood was the full and complete payment for all of your sins. The Apostle Paul says, “Through your sins you deserve death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁰”

This pardon is indeed Good News. This is the mercy God is now offering you. A entitlement program that is truly out of this world. Repent and return to Him.

Amen.



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

9 Ephesians 1:7
10 Romans 6:23