

Easter Tuesday, or Third Easter Day

Luke 24:36-47

The Manifestation of Christ After His Resurrection, and the Sermon He Preached to His Disciples

I. Christ's Manifestation after His Resurrection

Luke 24:36-47

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

I. Christ's Manifestation after His Resurrection

1. I think beloved, you have heard enough in these days on the resurrection of Christ, what it works, why it came to pass, and what fruit it bears. But since the Lord has commanded those who preach the Gospel to be steadfast and diligent in this proclamation, we must dwell upon it ever more and more. Our Gospel shows, first, who hear of the Lord's resurrection profitably and fruitfully, namely they are here assembled in fear and dread behind closed doors. To them it ought also to be preached most of all, although it must be preached to all nations, as the Lord says at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Therefore, let us learn first of all what kind of persons hear the Gospel aright.

2. The disciples are gathered there together in seclusion. They are afraid of the Jews are, indeed, in danger of their lives; they are fearful and fainthearted and afraid of sin and death. Had they been strong and courageous, they would not thus have crept into a corner; even as afterward they were made so courageous, when the Holy Spirit came and strengthened and comforted them, that they stepped forth and preached publicly without fear. This is written

for us, that we might learn that the Gospel of Christ's resurrection comforts only the fainthearted. And who are these? They are the poor, conscience-stricken ones, whose sins lie heavily upon them, who feel their faint heart, are loth to die, and are well-nigh startled by the sound of a rustling leaf. To these contrite, poor, and needy souls, the Gospel offers comfort, to them it is a sweet savor.

3. This is also learned from the nature of the Gospel, for the Gospel is a message and a testimony, which declares how the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, that he might remove sin, death and all evil from all who believe on him. If I recognize him as such a Savior, I have heard the Gospel aright, and he has in truth revealed himself to me. If now the Gospel teaches naught but that Christ has overcome sin and death by his resurrection, then we must indeed confess that it can be of service to none save those who feel sin and death. For they who do not feel their sin, and are not dismayed, nor see their infirmities, profit not a whit by it, nor do they delight in it. And though they hear the Gospel, it has no effect upon them, except that they learn the words, and speak of what they heard. They do not treasure them in their hearts, and receive neither comfort nor joy from them.

4. Hence it were well, if the Gospel could be preached only where such fainthearted and conscience-stricken ones are found. But this can not be, and for this reason it bears so little fruit. For this they reproach us and say that we wish to preach many new things, and yet no one is better because of our doctrine. The fault is not in the Gospel, but in the hearers. They hear it, indeed, but they do not feel their own affliction and misery, nor have they ever tried to feel it, they simply go on, secure and reprobate, like dumb brutes. Hence none need marvel if the Gospel does not everywhere bring forth fruit. For beside the good hearers, of whom we have spoken, there are many others that have no regard for it at all, have neither a conscience nor a heart for it, and think neither of death nor of the salvation of their souls. These must be driven by force, like asses and dumb brutes, and for this purpose the civil sword is established. Again there are some who do not despise the Gospel, but fully understand it, yet do not amend their lives, nor strive to walk in it. They carry away only the words and prate much about them, but neither deeds nor fruit follow. The third class, however, are they that taste it and use it aright so that it bears fruit in them.

5. This is then the conclusion of the matter, the Gospel is a testimony of the resurrection of Christ, which serves to comfort and refresh the poor, sorrowing, and terrified consciences. There is need that we have clearly apprehended this truth when we come to die, and also that we may provide for it in every other need. If you think: Behold, now death is approaching and staring me in the face; would that I had someone to comfort me, that I might not despair, then know that for this purpose the Gospel is good, here it belongs, here its use is blessed and salutary. As soon as a man knows and understands this, and believes the Gospel, his heart finds peace and says: If Christ, my Lord, has overcome my sin, and trodden it under foot by his resurrection, wherefore should I fear, and of what should I be afraid? Why should not my heart rejoice and be of good cheer? But such comfort, peace and joy of heart, are felt by none save the small company which was before greatly dismayed and full of sorrow, and felt its infirmities. Hence also the rude and impenitent understand neither this nor any other

Gospel, for he that has not tasted the bitter cannot relish the sweet, and he that has not seen adversity does not understand happiness. For as in the world that man who neither cares nor attempts to do any thing, and endures nothing, is good for nothing; so in a more eminent degree in spiritual things it is not possible that anyone should understand the Gospel except he who has such a dismayed and terrified heart.

6. From this you should learn that it is no marvel, that many who hear the Gospel do not receive it nor live according to it. Everywhere there are many who reject and persecute it, but we must let them go and grow accustomed to their work. Where the Gospel is preached, such people will surely be found; and it if were otherwise, it would not be right, for there must be many kinds of hearers. Again, many will be found, who do not persecute it and yet do not receive it, for they bear no fruit and continue to live as before. Be not worried because of this for even though a man preach and continue in the Gospel for many years, he must still lament and say: Aye, no one will come, and all continue in their former state. Therefore you must let that grieve nor terrify you.

7. For note what took place at Jerusalem, where the Gospel was first heard, and where there were so many people that it is said, there were in the city at the feast of the Passover eleven hundred thousand men. How many of these were converted? When St. Peter stood up and preached, they made a mockery of it and considered the apostles drunken fools. When they had urged the Gospel a long time, they gathered together three thousand men and women. But what were they among so many? Yea, no one could discern that the Gospel had accomplished anything, for all things continued in the same state as before. No change was seen, and scarcely anyone knew that there were Christians there. And so it will be at all times.

8. Hence the Gospel must not be measured by the multitude that hear, but by the small company that receive it. They, indeed, appear as nothing, they are despised and persecuted, and yet God secretly works in them.

9. Besides this there is another thing that hinders the free movement of the Gospel, namely the infirmities of the believers. This we see in many examples. Thus although Peter was filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, yet he fell and stumbled, he and all that were with him, when he walked not according to the Gospel nor according as he had taught, so that Paul had to reprove him openly, Gal. 2,14. There clung to him many great and holy men, and all stumbled with him. Again, we read that Mark journeyed with Paul, but afterward fell away and withdrew from him; and in Acts 15,37 we read again that Paul and Barnabas strove together, and there arose a sharp contention between them. And, before this, we read in the Gospels how often the apostles erred in weighty matters though they were the best of Christians.

10. These infirmities of Christians and believers darken the Gospel most of all, so that men who deem themselves wise and learned stumble and are offended in them. Few there are who can well reconcile these things so as to take no offense and hence say: Yes, these desire

to be good Christians, and are still so wayward, envious, filled with hate and wrath, that one thinks the Gospel has been preached in vain. This really signifies to be offended in the weak and sick Christ.

11. It was also thus with the disciples. At first, when Christ wrought great and excellent works, and gained great honors, and began the work only to fulfill it, they remained steadfast, though many great and noble saints and learned men were offended, because he would not join them. The common man on the contrary was instructed, and the people clung to him, because they saw that with great power he wrought such excellent works; and also walked as that none could reproach him, but all must needs say: Truly this is a great and holy prophet! But when his suffering began, they all turned back and forsook him, and not one of his disciples continued with him. Why was this? Because they considered him not the strong, but the weak Christ. He now was in the hands of the Jews, did no more works and miracles just as if he had lost all his power and was forsaken of God. Then perished completely his power and his great name. Before, they counted him a prophet, the like of whom had never appeared; now he is rated as a murderer and a condemned man. Who could now see that this was Christ, the Son of God? Here all reason must fall, yea, all the great and holy saints; for they thought: If he were the Christ, there would needs appear the fruits whereby we might know that it is he, but now we see in him only weakness and sin and death.

12. Therefore it is the highest wisdom on earth, though it is known by very few men, how to bear with the weak Christ. For if I see a pious, holy man leading a beautiful godly life, who will thank me for praising him and saying: There is Christ, and there is righteousness? For although bishops and great dunces be offended in such a one, the common people will be instructed. But if he be feeble and falter, straightway everyone will be offended and say: Alas! I had imagined him to be a good Christian, but I see that he falls short of it. However, if they look about them, they will find none without like infirmities, yea, they will perceive it in themselves. Still they think that the Gospel has come to naught. Thus might they think, if God were not able, in his wisdom, to hide it, even as he put a covering over Christ when he drew over him death and weakness, and Christ was under it, though no man could see it. Hence he told his disciples in advance, Mt. 26,31: "All, all you, shall be offended in me, and shall no more think nor believe that I am the Christ." Hence if we judge the Gospel, as I have said, according to the infirmity and weakness of Christians, as they stumble at times, a very great obstacle is presented at which offense is taken and the Gospel is thought to be without power.

13. Therefore he that would know Christ aright must not give heed to the covering. And though you see another stumble, do not despair, nor think all hope is lost; but rather think: God, perchance, will have this one bear the weak Christ, even as another bears the strong; for both must be and abide on earth, though the greater part appear weak and are such especially in our day. But if you pierce through such weakness, you will find that Christ lies hidden in that weak person, he will come forth and show himself.

14. That is what Paul means when he says to the Corinthians, in his First Epistle 2,2: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." What kind of glory is this that impels him to write that he knows nothing, save Christ crucified? It is a thing, that neither reason nor human wisdom can understand nor yet they who have studied and learned the Gospel; for this wisdom is mighty, hidden and mysterious, and seems of no value, because he was crucified and emptied himself of all power and divine strength, and hung upon the cross like a wretched, forsaken man, and it seemed as if God would not help him. Of him alone I speak and preach, says St. Paul. For the Christ, that sits on high, does wonders, comes and breaks through with power, that all may see who he is, and may quickly come to know him. But to know the weak Christ, that is hanging upon the cross and lying in death, one needs great wisdom; for they who know him not, must needs stumble and be offended.

15. Yea, some are also found who really know the Gospel, but are offended at their own manner of life. They have a desire to walk in godliness, but they feel they make no progress. They begin to despair and think that with them all is lost because they do not feel the strength which they ought to have, also earnestly desire Christ to become strong in them and manifest himself in mighty deeds. But Jehovah, our God, hereby designs to humble us, that we may see what feeble creatures we are, what wretched, lost and condemned men, if Christ had not come and helped us. Behold, that is the great wisdom we have, and at which all the world is offended.

16. But thereby we have no furlough, to continue for all time in weakness, for we do not preach that any should be weak, but that we should know the weakness of Christians and bear with it. Christ did not hang upon the cross, that he might appear as a murderer and evildoer, but that we might learn thereby how deeply strength lies hidden under weakness, and might learn to know God's strength in weakness. Thus our weakness is not to be praised, as though we should abide in it, but rather must we learn not to think that those who are weak are not Christians, nor yet to despair when we feel our own weakness. Therefore it behooves us to know our own weaknesses and ever to seek to wax stronger, for Christ must not suffer always, nor remain in the grave, but must come forth again and live.

17. Hence, let none say that this is the true course and condition. It is only a beginning, in which we must grow day by day, giving heed only that we turn not away and despair when we are so weak, as though all were lost. Rather must we continue to exercise ourselves till we wax stronger and stronger, and endure and bear the weakness, until God helps and takes it away. Hence, even though you see your neighbor so weak that he stumbles, think not that he is beyond hope. God will not have one judge another and be pleased with himself, inasmuch as we are all sinners, but that one bear the infirmity of the other (Rom. 14 and Gal. 6). And if you will not do that, he will let you fall and cast you down, and raise the other up. He desires to have us help one another and bear each other's weaknesses.

18. I have thus spoken of our infirmity in order that you may have a good understanding of it, for such knowledge is very necessary, especially at this time. Oh, if our bishops, pastors,

and prelates had had this wisdom, for they needed it the most, how much better would conditions be in Christendom! They would then be able to bear with the weak consciences, and would know how to minister to them. But now it has come to this, that they look only to the strong Christians, and can never bear with the weak; but deal only harshly with them and proceed with force. In times past, when conditions were yet good, the bishops were sorely wanting in this, for, though they were great and holy men, they yet constrained and oppressed the consciences too much. Such things do not take place among Christians, for it is Christ's will to be weak and sickly yet for a while, and to have both flesh and bones together, as he says here in the Gospel: "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having." He would have both, not bones only, nor flesh only. Thus we read in Gen. 2,23, that when God created Eve, Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." He says not flesh only or bones only; speaks of having both himself, for he too must needs have both. So it is also with Christ and with us, and hence he says here: I have both flesh and bones, you will find in me not only bones, nor yet only flesh; you will find that I am both strong and sick.

19. Thus also my Christians must be so mingled together, that some are strong and some weak. They that are strong, walk uprightly, are hale and hearty, and must bear the others; they are the bones. The others are the weak that cleave unto the strong. they are also the greater number, as in a body there will always be found more flesh than bones. Hence Jesus was crucified and died, and likewise was quickened again and glorified, that he might not be a spirit, as the disciples here deem him to be and were filled with fear of him, thinking that because he is not only bone and the strong Christ, it is not he, but a ghost.

20. This wisdom was diligently urged by the apostles and by Christ himself, and, beside this, I know of no book in which it is urged. Only this one book, the New Testament, urges it constantly, and everywhere strives to set before the people the weak and the strong Christ. Thus says St. Paul to the Romans 15,1-3: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself." Hence we must do the same, and this is the wisdom we are to learn here.

21. To this school belong all that are pictured here in this Gospel, whom Christ finds terrified and frightened. The others, who do not belong here, are easily identified, for they reject and despise the Gospel. In like manner everyone can know himself, whether he truly takes pleasure in the Gospel. And if you see in another's behavior evidence of an earnest desire to be made holy, you should not despise him.

22. This Gospel therefore shows the following: First, that the Lord stands among the disciples and is now strong, having overcome sin, death, and the devil; but they do not stand as yet, but sit there, and he comes and stands in the midst of them. Where does he stand at the present time? In the midst of the weak and fainthearted company, that sit in fear and weakness, while he is strong and mighty, though it is not yet apparent to the world. But even though the world does not see it, God sees it. Second, he shows them his hands and his feet,

and comforts them, saying: "Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones," etc.

23. This is nothing but a sermon that teaches us not to be offended in the weak Christ. He does not rebuke the disciples harshly, does not say: Away with you; I do not want you. You should be strong and courageous, but here you sit and are dismayed and terrified! He does not do these things; but lovingly comforts them, that he might make them strong and fearless, and not only this, but also cheerful and of good courage. Therefore we ought not to cast away the weak, but so deal with them that, from day to day, we may bring them to a condition that they may become strong and of good cheer. This does not signify that it is well, if they are weak, and that they should continue weak; for Christ does not stand among them for that purpose, but that they might grow in faith and be made fearless.

24. Here we may also speak, as the text gives occasion, of ghosts or walking spirits, for we see here that the Jews and the apostles themselves held that spirits roam about and are seen by night and at other times. Thus Mt. 14,25f, when the disciples sailed in a ship by night, and saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were frightened, as before a ghost, and cried out in fear. And here we learn that Jesus does not deny it but confirms it by his answer that spirits do appear, for he says: "A spirit has not flesh and bones," etc.

25. But the Scriptures do not say, nor give any example, that such are the souls of dead persons walking among the people and seeking help, as we, in our blindness and deluded by the devil, have heretofore believed. Hence the pope has, also, invented purgatory and established his shameful annual market of masses. We may well see in this false doctrine and abomination as a fruit, that the foundation on which it is built, namely the doctrine of the migration of souls, comes from the father of lies, the devil, who has deluded the people in the name of the dead.

26. We have good reason not to believe such apparitions of roaming erring spirits that profess to be souls. First, because the Scriptures nowhere say that the souls of the deceased, that have not yet risen, should wander about among the people; whereas everything else we need to know, is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Not one word concerning this is given for our instruction, nor is it possible that we should grasp and understand the state of the spirits that have departed from the body, before the resurrection and the day of judgment; for they are sundered and separated altogether from the world and from this generation. Moreover, it is clearly forbidden in the Scriptures to consult the dead or to believe them who do. Deut. 18,11; Is. 28,19. And Lk. 16,31 proves that God will neither let one rise from the dead nor preach, because we have Moses and the Scriptures.

27. Know therefore that all ghosts and visions, which cause themselves to be seen and heard, especially with din and noise, are not men's souls, but evidently devils that amuse themselves thus either to deceive the people with false claims and lies, or unnecessarily frighten and trouble them. Hence with a specter that makes a pretense in the name of a soul a

Christian should not deal otherwise than as with the very devil himself. He should be well girded with God's Word and faith, that he may not be deceived nor frightened, but abide in the doctrine that he has learned and confessed from the Gospel of Christ, and cheerfully despise the devil with his noise. Nor does he tarry long where he feels a soul trusts in Christ and despises him. This I say that we may be wise and not suffer ourselves to be misled by such deception and lies, as in the past he deceived and mocked even excellent men, like St. Gregory, under the name of being a soul.

28. Now what does it signify that he shows the disciples his hands and his feet? He would thereby say: Come, and learn to know me. Now I am strong, but you are weak, as I also was. Therefore see to it now that you become strong also.

II. The Sermon Christ Preached to His Disciples

29. The above is one chief part of this Gospel; the other follows at the end of the Gospel, where the Lord concludes by saying: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations."

30. Here you see that the Gospel is the preaching of repentance and remission of sins. And it should not be preached in a corner, but before all men, whether it be received, or not, for it is to spread even farther that it may be heard and bear fruit. Hence we are not to be offended though but few receive it, nor say it has been given in vain. We should, rather, be content with it, that Christ has given command to preach it in all the world, that he who will may receive it. But we must note here in particular, that he says:

31. First, let us consider two thoughts. By repentance he means a change for the better; not as we have called it repentance, when one scourges and castigates himself and does penance to atone for his sin, or when the priest imposes this or that upon any one for penance. Scripture does not speak of it in this sense. Repentance rather- signifies here a change and reformation of the whole life; so that when one knows that he is a sinner, and feels the iniquity of his life, he, desists from it and enters upon a better course of life, in word and deed, and that he does it from his heart.

32. What then is repentance in his name? Hereby he singles out the repentance that is not made in his name, and hence the text compels us to consider two kinds of repentance. First, a repentance not in his name is, when I come with my own works and undertake to blot out sin with them; as we all have hitherto been taught and have tried to do. This is not repentance in God's name, but in the devil's name. For this is striving to propitiate God by our own works and by our own strength, a thing God cannot allow.

33. But on the other hand, to repent in his name is done thus: in those who believe in Christ God through the same faith works a change for the better, not for a moment, nor for an hour, but for their whole life. For a Christian is not instantaneously or suddenly cleansed perfectly,

but the reformation and change continue as long as he live. Though we use the utmost diligence, we will always find something to sweep or clean. For even though all wickedness be overcome, we have not yet overcome the fear of death, for few have come so far as to desire death with a spirit of rejoicing; hence, we must grow better day by day. this is what Paul means, when he says in 2 Cor. 4,16: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." For we hear the Gospel every day, and Christ shows us his hands and his feet every day that our minds may be still more enlightened, and we be made more and more godly.

34. For this reason Christ would say, let no one strive to amend his life by his own works and in his own name; for of themselves no one is an enemy of sin, no one will come to repentance and think of amending his life. Nothing will be accomplished except in my name. That name alone has power to do it, and brings with it willing-ness and desire to be changed. But if the works and doctrines of men be taught, I will go and say to myself: O, that I might not need to pray, nor make confession, nor go to the Lord's Supper! What will your repentance profit you, if you fail to do it gladly or willingly, but are constrained by the commandment or by fear of shame, otherwise you would rather not do it? But what is the reason? Because it is a repentance in the devil's name, in your own name or in the pope's name. Hence you go on and do worse things, and wish there were no confession and sacrament, so that you might not be constrained to attend them. This is repentance in our own name and proceeds from our own strength.

35. But when I begin to believe in Christ, lay hold of the Gospel, and doubt not that he has taken away my sin and blotted it out, and comforts me with his resurrection; my heart is filled with such gladness that I myself take hold willingly, not through persuasion, nor of necessity, I gladly do what I ought and say: Because my Lord has done this for me, I will also do his will in this, that I may amend my ways and repent out of love to him and to his glory. In this way a true reformation begins that proceeds from the innermost heart, and that is brought forth by the joy that flows from faith, when I apprehend the greatness of the love Christ has bestowed upon me.

36. Secondly, we should preach also forgiveness of sins in his name. This signifies nothing else than that the Gospel should be preached, which declares unto all the world that in Christ the sins of all the world are swallowed up, and that he suffered death to put away sin from us, and arose to devour it, and blot it out. All this he did, that whoever believeth, should have the comfort and assurance that it is reckoned unto, him even as if he himself had done it; that his work is mine and thine and all men's; yea that he gives himself to us with all his gifts to be our own personal property. Hence, as he is without sin and never dies by virtue of his resurrection even so I also am if I believe in him; and I will therefore strive to become more and more godly, till there be no more sin in me. This continues as long as we live, until the day of judgment. As he is, without sin, he sets before us an example, that we might be fashioned like unto him, though while we live here, we shall be fully like the image.

37. St. Paul speaks of this in writing to the Corinthians: "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3, 18. Christ, even as he is risen, is the image, and is set before us that we might know that he rose from the dead to overcome our sin. This image stands before us and is set before our eyes by the Gospel, and is so mirrored in our hearts that we grasp it by faith, if we hold it to be true and daily exercise ourselves in it. Thus the glory is imparted by him to us, and it comes to pass that we become ever more glorious, and grow into the same image that he is. Hence he also says that we are not at once made perfect and strong, but must grow from day to day till we become like him. Many similar passages are here and there in the Scriptures.

38. This then is preaching the forgiveness of sins in his name, that we do not point only to confession, or to a certain hour; for we must act in view of the fact that it deals not with our works but with the whole person. Even when we begin to believe, our sin and infirmity are always present so that there is nothing pure in us and we are indeed worthy of condemnation. But now forgiveness is so great and powerful, that God not only forgives the former sins you have committed; but looks through his fingers and forgives the sins you will yet commit, He will not condemn us for our daily infirmities, but forgives all, in view of our faith in him, if we only strive to press onward and get rid of sin.

39. Here you may see what a difference there is between this and that which has heretofore been preached, of buying letters of indulgence, and of confessions, by which it was thought sin could be blotted out. So far as this was pressed and such confidence was there put in it, that men were persuaded if any one should die upon it, he would straightway mount to heaven. They did not know that we have still more sin and will not be rid of it, as long as we live. They supposed that all is well if only we have been to confession. Hence this is a forgiveness in the name of the devil. But see that you understand it correctly: By absolution you are absolved and declared free from sin, that is, you are put into that state, where there is forgiveness of sin at never ends. And not only is there forgiveness of past sins, but of those also you now have, if you believe that God overlooks and forgives your sins; and although you stumble still, yet he will neither reject nor condemn you, if you continue in faith. This teaching is heard indeed in all the world, but few there be that understand it.

40. Thus you have heard what the Gospel is, and what repentance and forgiveness of sins are, whereby we enter into another, a new state, out of the old. But take heed, lest you trust in this and become sluggish, thinking that when you sin there is no danger, and thus boldly persist in sin. This would be sinning in spite of God's mercy and would tempt God. But if desire to be delivered from sin, it is well with you, and all is forgiven. So much then on the second part of this Gospel, and with it we shall for the present content ourselves.

II. Easter Tuesday, or Third Easter Day

Luke 24:36-47

Contents:

A consoling example and picture of Christ, and the sermon Christ preached to his disciples.

I. A COMFORTING EXAMPLE AND PICTURE OF CHRIST

1. In the first part of this Gospel we have for our consolation another example showing how Christ manifests himself and how he is wont to act toward his beloved disciples. They have scarcely begun to speak of him, when he himself comes and stands in their midst and greets them with these kind and cheerful words: "Pax vobis!" (Peace be unto you!) The disciples, however, are frightened at this and suppose they behold a spirit. But he suffers them not to be thus frightened, rebukes them for allowing such thoughts to enter their hearts, and shows them his hands and feet; that they may see that he is not a spirit, nor another Christ than he has been in the past, but is of their own flesh and bones and of the selfsame nature as they. This he does that they may not be afraid of him, but may rejoice in him and be comforted, and look to him for good things.

2. For this example of his conduct is to serve as an object lesson as it were, instilling comfort into all terrified hearts; especially against that spectre called a false Christ. For the devil also has the habit of coming to people, both in public and in private, either through false doctrine or through secret inward working, and he even pretends to be Christ himself. He begins with a pleasant greeting, with a smiling "good morning;" but ere long he smites the heart with sorrow and dread, that it knows not what has become of Christ.

3. For his delight is to deceive us under the name and guise of Christ; and he is ever desirous of aping God and of imitating him in all that he sees him do. Now, when God reveals himself he employs the following manner: First, in deed, he terrifies those who have not been terrified as yet. Besides, hearts that are naturally timid always stand in dread of his words and works by reason of their timid nature. But those who are terrified already, he comforts again and speaks kindly to them. The devil imitates this and likewise comes with the name and works of Christ; but both his comfort and his terrors are counterfeit. For he reverses the two, terrifying and dismaying those who stand in need of comfort, and comforting and strengthening those who should be afraid and stand in fear of God's wrath. To shield ourselves against this deception, we should learn from this Gospel to distinguish correctly between the doctrines and ideas that come to our notice, both such as terrify and such as comfort, that we may know which of them are of God and which of the devil.

4. For, in the first place, that lying spirit, already in Paradise, began this sweet deception when he approached Eve with his courteous, kind, and honeyed words: Why, there is no

danger. You need not stand in fear and dread of eating of one single tree. Do you suppose that God has really forbidden you this one fruit, that he begrudges you the eating of this one tree? Indeed, he knows, if you eat thereof, you will become much wiser and will be as God. This was, indeed, very encouraging and a pleasing sermon, but it left an abominable stench behind, and by it the whole human race was led into the evil, which we all to this day deplore. For this reason it has become a common saying among men who have striven to be devout and sought to discern the spirits, that the devil always comes with winning and cheering words at first, but leaves terror and a troubled conscience in his wake, while the Good Spirit does the contrary.

5. And it is true, this is one of the wanton tricks he practices. He creeps in unawares, like a serpent, and first makes himself attractive, in the manner indicated, and insinuates himself into favor; but before one is aware of it he strikes with his tail and leaves a poisoned wound. For this reason one should not be too credulous when a preacher comes softly like an angel of God, recommends himself very highly, and swears that his sole aim is to save souls, and says: "Pax vobis!" For those are the very fellows the devil employs to honey people's mouths. Through them he gains an entrance to preach and to teach, in order that he may afterward inflict his injuries, and that though he accomplish nothing more for the present, he may, at least, confound the people's consciences and finally lead them into misery and despair.

6. This same thing he does by means of thoughts which he causes to arise within the heart, by which he tempts people and even entices them to gross sins. Here, too, he invariably begins with the word "Peace!" that he may first cause the people to lose sight of the fear of God; making light of grave matters, and always preaching and proclaiming: "Pax et securitas!" There is no cause for worry! But much more does he do this with those great and serious sins pertaining to the faith and the glory of God, in which he moves people to idolatry and to a trust in their own works and holiness. Here he at first pretends to be holy and pious and impart the very sweetest of thoughts: Oh, there is no cause for alarm, God is not angry with you. Even as the prophets say of such. Jeremiah 6:14; Ezekiel 33:30. They will hear thee and suffer thee to preach, but they will ever comfort and bless themselves and say: Oh, there is no reason to fear; hell' is not so hot, the devil is not so black as he is painted. This is the devil's entrance and deception, even though he speak peace and extend a friendly greeting. Not until afterwards, when one is already enmeshed and cannot escape, does one see what injury and distress he has caused. Thus experience teaches that many a man falls into sin, shame, and punishment, so easily that he himself is not aware of it, being drawn in by means of subtle and pleasant thoughts, as it were by a hair or a straw.

7. Behold, this is one of his ways, by which he misleads many foolish, secure, and careless minds; he leads them to imagine that they are resting in God's lap and playing with dolls, with him. And they become so intoxicated with these imaginations and this sweet poison of the devil, so proud, hardened, and obstinate, that they simply will not listen nor give heed to anybody. However, some God-fearing people have noticed this and have warned others against the devil's wiles, declaring how he enters in so softly and pretends he is bringing

divine comfort, but at last leaves a stench behind betraying that he has been about. But this is comparatively easy and a matter for younger disciples. Every Christian should certainly possess enough wisdom to be on his guard against such pleasant poison. For he who insists on learning by experience to guard against the devil's wiles, pays dearly for his learning and then he doesn't fully understand the devil's trickery.

8. His second way of doing is this: He frightens people, even in trifling matters, by means of jugglery, for example, and by apparitions. He has been very busy in the past with tappings which were supposed to be the work of departed souls. In this way he harasses and terrifies timid and fearful hearts and thus passes on, leaving no comfort behind. Much worse, however, is it, when he comes into the heart and there begins to argue and reason, quoting even such passages as Christ himself uttered, thereby causing the heart to become so awe-stricken that it has no other thought than that it hears the voice of God and Christ. And when thoughts of this kind prevail the heart must at last despair, for where else shall it hope to find comfort when it feels that God himself, who should be its comfort, is terrifying it and aiming his arrows at it; as Job complains in 6, 4: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof my spirit drinketh up: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." Though it is not God that does this but the devil, who takes pleasure in thus piercing hearts with his arrows (as also he did to St. Paul, 2 Cor 12), yet Satan had gained such a hold on Job's heart that the poor man could say and think nothing but this: It is God that doeth these things.

9. This, then, is a much greater and more dangerous deception of Satan's, when he comes without any kindly greeting, bidding us neither "Good morning" nor "Peace" but frightens and terrifies the heart – and all in the voice and guise of God. So that man, overpowered and stricken down hereby is unable to raise himself up and think: It is the devil. For since his heart imagines and feels as if it were God, against whom no man can prevail, heaven and earth seem to him as a narrow cell, the hand of every creature is against him and everything he sees and hears affrights him.

10. As contrasted with this shameless lying Satan, Christ has here portrayed and pictured himself as he really is. For although it is true that he, too, sometimes comes with terrors, sometimes with comfort, still it is his sole and final purpose to give life and comfort and make glad the heart. And yet the heart of man is so void of understanding in both cases that it does not recognize him (the devil at the same time assisting in the delusion with his suggestions), and does not think that it is Christ, or straightway makes of him a false Christ, even as the Apostles here take him for a spirit or spectre; and they have neither heart nor mind to believe it is Christ, in spite of the fact that they see Christ's form and features. It is, therefore, the part of great art and understanding to tear the false Christ out of one's heart and to learn to picture him truly, because as has been said, one must bear in mind that the devil pictures to us a false Christ, yea clothes himself in Christ's form.

11. So then, this Gospel shows what the true Christ and his Word are, namely, in the first place, that he says, "Peace be unto you," which is a portion of the comfort that he brings;

and, in the second place, that he reproveth the people and will not suffer them to form false and fretful ideas of himself and says: "Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your hearts?" No wealth of money or goods could ever pay for this text, because a troubled heart may learn from it and conclude: Even though the devil quote all the passages in the Bible in order to terrify the heart, yet if he continue too long and fail to bring comfort afterward, then it is surely the devil, even if you see the form of Christ as plainly as when he hung upon the cross or as he sits at the right hand of the Father. For it may, indeed, happen, that Christ comes and terrifies you at first; though it is by no means his fault, but the fault of your nature, that you 'do not rightly know him. But he that assails you with terrors and ceases not until he leads you into despair, is the devil himself.

12. Therefore you must clearly distinguish between the terrors of Christ and those of the devil. For even though Christ begin by terrifying, yet he is certain to bring comfort with him and does not will that you remain in terror. The devil, however, cannot cease from his terrifying although at first he comforts and acts pleasantly. This a Christian must know: he must learn to discern Christ from the devil. Especially in great afflictions, when he feels anxiety and dread, he must bear in mind that there will not be terrors only and continually, but that they will' cease and that comfort will follow.

13. But, you say, it is Christ and his Word after all, for he, too, preaches about God's wrath on account of sin, as he says, Luke 13:5: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," etc. I answer: Indeed, with this he is pleased and it must come to pass that you become terrified on account of your sins (in case you have not yet experienced this terror). Yea, by reason of your timid nature he must let it come to pass that you be terrified even at him, as these disciples were. But it is not his intention to have you remain in terror; on the contrary, he wills that you cease from it. Yes, he even reproveth you for it, and says that you are doing him an injustice by such thoughts, imputing such things to him. In short, he does not desire that you should be frightened at him, but that you should take comfort and joyful assurance, thus driving away your terror.

14. Now, if these thoughts which terrify you arise from his words and works, let him thus begin with you, but then simply send him away to those who are still secure, hardhearted, and obdurate, for whom his terrors are intended. Upon them he must cry out his woes and them he must threaten with the eternal fire of hell. For they are people who in no wise fear God; on the contrary, when one wishes to put them in awe with the name and Word of God, they throw up their horns, toss their heads at God, and grow harder than steel or flint. But you, when you feel that you have become terrified (God grant it, whether the true Christ does it, or not), just remember to make an end of it and cease your fears. For if it be Christ indeed, it is not his will that you continue thus; but if it be not he, still less should you do so.

15. Therefore mark and keep in mind this text and its example: Christ does not will that his own be terrified, and it does not please him to find you appalled at the sight of him. On the contrary, it is his will that you learn to know him as one who, when he finds you troubled and alarmed, rejoices to come to you, and that you too should rejoice over him and dismiss

your thoughts of fear. And do not fail to learn that this is his way of speaking: “Why are ye troubled, and why permit ye such thoughts to arise in your hearts?” Ye picture me as a spectre and as one that cometh only to terrify you, and lo! I am come to comfort you and to make you glad.

16. For these reasons, when such oppressive thoughts concerning Christ come to you, be wise and understand that they assuredly come not from Christ but from the devil; and that even though you be terrified at him, a little sudden terror shall do you no harm. For it is in accord with our nature that it never prompts us to anything good, especially when the heart is naturally timid and fretful. Never mind your thoughts and notions. Take heed to hear Christ’s words, who takes no pleasure in seeing you terrified in his name, but desires that you rejoice in him and receive him as one who would comfort your poor, sinful and troubled heart. Let the others be terrified, those headstrong, impenitent sinners, the pope, the tyrants, and all of Christ’s enemies and blasphemers. These people need a sledge hammer that will shatter boulders, rocks and mountains.

17. Therefore, if there be a Christ who terrifies, he is and desires to be such only to these obstinate heads; although they themselves do not believe this, but proudly disregard it until their last hour has come, and the time when he without any mercy whatever must trample them under his feet. But he does not desire to be such to his beloved disciples and believers, who are too backward and timid as it is, insomuch that they become alarmed even in the presence of their beloved Savior. For it is by no means his intention, as St. Matthew says in 12:20, quoting from the prophet Isaiah 42:3, to utterly break and quench the bruised reed and the smoking flax; that is, broken, troubled, humbled, and fearsome consciences. Now, what if these hardened, proud, and brazen, Satanic minds do pay no heed at all to his terrilyings? Should timid, fearful hearts suffer these terrors in their stead and bring such fear upon themselves, when in short he wants them to be of good courage? Or, since no terrors and threats avail with the former, should therefore no comfort avail with the latter? In this case Christ’s cause were lost entirely, and his kingdom would find no room and bear no fruit on earth.

18. Hence, if you feel terrified and faint-hearted, let your heart herein take comfort, so that Christ may find room in you; for he does not by any means find in you a proud, impenitent heart, unwilling to humble itself; otherwise you would have good cause and need to fear him as one who is set to be a judge over the wicked and the scorners. But he comes to you in order to bring and offer you grace and peace, even as you desire and pray. I say again, take care in this matter, lest you cast from you this friendly greeting and your own salvation, and lest you make a Satan of this dear Savior, or rather, lest you, instead of hearkening to Christ, hearken to the devil, who is a liar and a murderer and takes delight in vexing weak and troubled hearts. And he never desists from so doing; and if he finds himself unable to cause enough terror with one verse he comes with ten or a hundred, and continues to oppress until the heart is completely overwhelmed and drowned in sorrow.

19. Now, you as a Christian can conclude with certainty that such thoughts are not and cannot be of Christ. Yea, even if it were possible that it were Christ himself, nevertheless you here have his Word and true testimony, which you should believe more than all apparitions. And surely this is to be preferred to all private visions of Christ or of an angel from heaven, for these can err and deceive and are naught but speechless images. But here you have his living voice and Word, publicly speaking before all his disciples and reproofing them for such thoughts, that we may know he is displeased with them.

20. Besides he shows the very same thing by his outward signs and works: the words with which he reproofs their thoughts do not suffice him, he also shows them his hands and feet that they may feel and see it is he himself. As though he thus would say: Why will ye still have doubts concerning me and in your thoughts make a spectre of me? Ye surely have never yet handled a devil or a spirit, nor seen one having flesh and blood as I have, although they at times assume such form and deceive the senses.

21. Thus he gives them, in addition to his Word, a sure and potent sign and comforts them by his actions, that they may fear him not in the least. He shows them what he has done for them. For this is in truth a lovely, comforting, and cheerful picture, the sight of this dear Savior's hands and feet, pierced for my sake, and together with which also my sins are nailed to the cross. This he shows me as a token and testimony that he has suffered, has been crucified, and has died for me, and is by no means disposed to be angry with me and cast me into hell.

22. For this is really seeing his hands and feet, if I, through his Word and faith, perceive that what he has done was done for my good, my salvation and comfort. Here I see no executioner, surely no death nor hell, but only sweet, delightful grace toward all poor, sorrowing souls, at which grace I cannot be affrighted or terrified; excepting only in this that his work is entirely too great for the heart sufficiently to grasp and understand. Thus he would, both by word and deed, free us from fear even though at first we be terrified at the sight of him.

23. On the other hand the devil, although at first he comforts us, at last he also shows his hands and feet; these are the horrible, abominable claws of the wrath of God and of eternal death. So finally he comes with naught but terrors, murder, and slaughter, which are his works from the beginning. He knows how to portray to the soul all the terrible scenes, examples, and histories of all the abominable sins, murders, and terrible punishments that have ever taken place, and the number and prominence of the people whom he has ever misled, blinded, and cast into perdition.

24. Now, where Christ is thus rightly understood, there, in consequence, true joy begins, and in such measure, like the Evangelist says, as to make the disciples marvel in their faith for very joy, and as to hamper them still. This again is a peculiar text and a strange saying. At first their faith was hampered by fear and dreadful thoughts; now their joy hampers their faith, a joy which even is far greater than at first their terror was. The disciples are now so

full of joy at the reproof of the Lord and the sight of his hands and feet that they are still unable to believe.

25. This, too, is one of the Christian's afflictions, as we have said before, that grace is entirely too great and glorious a thing when we look upon our littleness and unworthiness in comparison with Christ, and that the comfort is so exceedingly abundant that our hearts are far too small to receive it. For who could have the boldness to conceive in his heart the truth that Christ proves himself to be so kind a Savior to me, a poor, sinful man, that he gives me at once all that he has done? Must not the heart presently start with alarm at its own boldness and say: Do you really think it is true that the great and majestic God, the Maker of heaven and earth, has so regarded my misery and so mercifully looked upon me, deeply and manifoldly as I have sinned against him, having deserved and brought upon myself wrath, death, and hell a thousand times? How can such grace and such a treasure be grasped by the human heart, or in fact by any creature ?

26. To sum up all, faith in man's heart is assailed on both sides and upon both occasions, in terror and melancholy and also in joy. Either the lack or the abundance is too great, and the consolations too few or too many. At first, while the disciples were yearning for something great, all the blessings of God were too small and too insignificant to comfort their hearts, when Christ was still hidden from them; but now that he is come and shows himself to them, this is far too much for their hearts, and for very wonderment they cannot believe he is risen from the dead and is standing before them alive.

27. Finally he shows himself even still more friendly: he sits down with them at the table, eats with them of broiled fish and honeycomb, and preaches to them a beautiful sermon, to establish them in the faith, that they may nevermore fear nor doubt, but may now grow strong in the faith: and thus all their melancholy passes away.

28. Therefore let us learn from this to understand Christ's character and manner, to-wit, that when he comes and manifests himself he thereupon takes leave and bids us adieu, leaving naught but comfort and joy; for at the last he must come with comfort, otherwise it is not Christ. But when constant fear and dread remain in the heart, you may freely conclude that it is not Christ, though it may seem so to the heart, but the accursed devil. Therefore pay no heed to such thoughts, but cling fast to the words he speaks to you, "See my hands and my feet," etc. In this way your heart will again be made glad, and afterward the fruit will follow, that you will understand the Scriptures aright, and his Word will taste pleasant to you, being naught but honey and the sweetest consolation.

II. SERMON CHRIST PREACHED TO HIS DISCIPLES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

29. The second and chief part of this Gospel is that in which Christ, after he expounded the Scripture to them and opened their minds, says in conclusion:

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations."

30. Here you see how the Lord again directs and leads his disciples into the Scriptures, there to strengthen and confirm their faith. So that, though he was revealing and showing himself to them in visible form, yet in the future, when they no longer beheld him, he desired them to cling to the Word and by the testimony of the Scripture make sure both their own and the faith of others. For, after all, the power and the comfort of the resurrection are not understood nor received except through faith in the Word, as we have heard: although the disciples see him, still they do not recognize him, but are rather terrified at the sight of him until he speaks to them and opens their minds by means of the Scriptures.

31. Furthermore he wished to teach them by these testimonies of Scripture how his kingdom on earth is to continue and wherein it is to consist; namely, that it is not to be a new government or kingdom, concerned with earthly and temporal things, but a spiritual and divine power, whereby he would everywhere rule invisibly within the hearts of men through the Word and ministry and would cause them to pass from sin, God's wrath, and eternal death into grace and eternal life in heaven: for which purpose, in truth, he also suffered and rose again from the dead.

32. All this he shows and indicates in these few words, and in them includes the sum and substance of the entire Gospel and the chief parts of Christian doctrine, which we should at all times preach and practice in the church: namely, repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Therefore we must say something on these themes also.

33. Concerning repentance the whole papal church has until now known nothing else to teach than that it consists of three parts, which they call contrition, confession, and satisfaction (compensation). And yet in regard to none of these could they rightly instruct the people. Now, the Latin word "satisfactio," meaning "compensation," we have, to please them, allowed to stand, hoping that by moderation on our part we might be able to lead them to the true doctrine; but with the understanding that this means not our compensation, as we in reality can render none, but Christ's satisfaction, in that he by his blood and death has paid for our sins and reconciled God. Since, however, we have heretofore so many times experienced and still plainly see that nothing whatever can be gained from them by moderation, and that they steadily continue the more violently to oppose the true doctrine, we will and must cleanly strip and sunder ourselves from them, and refuse in any way to recognize the fictitious names which they use in their schools and with which they now only strive to establish their old errors and falsehoods. For this reason also this word "satisfaction" shall hereafter in our church and our theology be null and dead, and referred to the judiciary and the schools of law, where it properly belongs and whence the papists borrowed it. Let these use this word and by it teach people who have stolen, robbed, or who are in possession of goods gotten by unrighteousness, how they are to make compensation and restitution.

34. The word "contrition" (Latin "contritio") is, to be sure, taken from the Scriptures, which speak of a "cor contritum," that is, a broken, troubled, and miserable heart, Psalm 51:17; but neither has this word been rightly understood and explained by the monks. For they have

called contrition the act, extorted from one's own thoughts and free will, of sitting in a corner, hanging one's head, and with bitter meditation contemplating the sins one has committed; from which process, however, no real sorrow or displeasure on account of their sins followed, but they have rather tickled themselves with such thoughts and strengthened their sinful lust. And no matter how long they talked of it, still they could not decide how great one's contrition should be in order to be adequate to the sin. Wherefore they were compelled to console and help themselves out by this piece of patchwork, that he who could not attain to truly perfect contrition should, at least, have what they called "attritio," a sort of half-contrition, and be, at least, somewhat sorry for his sins.

35. Then they made of confession an unbearable torment and anxiety; for they thought that it was everyone's duty at least once a year to enumerate all of one's sins, mentioning all the details, including also those sins one might have forgotten and might later recall. And yet they gave men's consciences no real instruction concerning the comfort of absolution, but directed the people to trust in their own works, and informed them that when they had become sufficiently contrite to make a clean confession of sin (which was, according to their own teaching, impossible), and also render satisfaction for the same, then their sins would be forgiven. Here not a word was said of Christ or of faith, so that unenlightened and afflicted souls who earnestly desired to be free from sin and sought comfort were kept in eternal suspense on this doubtful foundation.

36. And – this was the worst feature of the matter – they did not rightly teach what constitutes sin; they knew nothing more of it than what lawyers call sin or offenses, and what comes within the sphere of the courts and of peace statutes. Their knowledge did not enable them to speak of original sin or of the inward impurity of the heart. For they even claimed that human nature and the powers of man's free will were so perfect that a man might in his own strength manage to fulfill God's law and thereby earn God's grace, and be so free from sin that he would not have need of any repentance. However, that they might nevertheless have something to make confession of, they were compelled to invent sin where there was none, just as on the other hand they invented good works of their own. And these sins they considered the greatest and most grievous of all, as for instance, when a layman chanced to touch a consecrated chalice or if a priest stammered while reading the canon in the mass, and other foolishness of that sort.

37. Such nonsensical, visionary doctrine of the papacy concerning repentance one must therefore not lose sight of, first in order to be able to convince them of their error and blindness, since they are at present in every way whitewashing themselves and disporting themselves as though they had never taught anything wrong. Secondly, in order that by contrasting the two one may better understand the true Christian doctrine. Therefore we will speak according to Scripture on what the real Christian repentance and forgiveness of sins are which Christ here commands man to proclaim in his name.

38. In the first place, these thoughts of our own invention, which the monks call "contritio" and "attritio" (whole and half contrition), are in all the Scriptures never called true

contrition; but you are contrite when your heart becomes seriously alarmed at God's wrath and judgment, not only on account of outward, gross sins, but on account of the real and unyielding hardness you see and feel within, the presence in your flesh and blood of nothing but unbelief, contempt and disobedience to God, and as St. Paul says in Romans 8:7, "enmity against God," your flesh and blood being excited with all manner of evil lust and desire and the like, whereby you have brought upon yourself God's wrath and have deserved to be cast out eternally from his presence and to burn in hell fire. Contrition, according to the Scriptures, is not partial, pertaining merely to certain acts you have committed openly against the ten commandments, and leaving undisturbed the dream and delusion of the hypocritical monkish repentance which for its own convenience invents a distinction in its works and after all discovers some good in itself; but it extends over your whole person with all its life and being, yes, over your whole nature, and shows you that you are an object of God's wrath and condemned to hell. Otherwise the word "contrition" would still be too judicial, as in earthly matters one speaks of sin and sorrow as of a work one has done and afterwards thinks differently, and wishes he had not done it.

39. This contrition and earnest fear is not the product of man's own resolutions or thoughts, as the monks fancy. It must be wrought in a man by God's Word, which reveals God's wrath and smites the heart so that it begins to tremble and despair and knows not what to do with itself. For human reason cannot of itself perceive and understand that everything which lies in the power and ability of man is an object of God's wrath and, at the bar of his judgment, already condemned to hell.

40. Therefore this thing must be preached and proclaimed as Christ here says, if one is to direct and lead people to true repentance: they must be led to know their sins and God's wrath, and thus first suffer themselves to be cast by the Word beneath God's wrath and condemnation; in order that on the other hand by the preaching of the other truth, of the forgiveness of sins, they may be helped to gain true consolation, divine grace, and their salvation. Otherwise a man would never attain to a knowledge of his misery and distress and to a yearning for grace. Still less would he ever learn how he may pass from God's wrath and damnation into grace and the forgiveness of sins.

41. And this preaching of repentance, says he, shall go forth unto all nations. Surely, a sweeping accusation, one that embraces the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, and whomsoever they wish. Without a single exception, he concludes all – as he finds them and whatever their rank and pretensions – apart from Christ under the wrath of God and says: Ye are all condemned together, with all that ye do and are, be ye what ye may, be ye ever so many, ever so great, ever so high and holy.

42. Yea, he terrifies and condemns those most of all who parade their own holiness and never once imagine that they are sinners and need repentance. Among the Jews the holiest Pharisees were such (of whom also Paul before his conversion was one), who lived and walked zealously according to the law; among the heathen certain cultured, highly intelligent, wise, and respectable people; among ourselves, those who may have been pious

monks, Carthusians, or hermits, who sincerely undertook to be pious in God's sight and so lived that they were not conscious of having committed any sin unto death, and in addition to this in the severest manner chastised their bodies with fasting, vigils, sleeping on hard couches, some even with bloody flagellations and the like; so that they themselves and everybody else thought that in view of such works and such a life they surely had no need of contrition and repentance. Yes, they thought therewith, as with the best and most meritorious work, to pay for whatever sins they had previously done, and honestly to earn heaven from God by such a holy life, paying for it dearly enough. Against just such people as these this preaching of repentance should be carried on most zealously, and as with a thunderbolt it should hurl to the ground and cast into hell and perdition all who are secure and presumptuous and do not yet perceive their misery and God's wrath.

43. Even as St. John the Baptist, who prepared the way before Christ, publicly began such preaching; he courageously and spiritedly attacks the entire Jewish nation with this battle-ax and assails the holy Pharisees and Sadducees harder than all the others, saying: "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Matthew 3:7. For they need repentance most of all and in God's sight they also merit a greater measure of wrath than other and more open sinners (whom at least their own consciences reprove), because they lie in blindness and indulge the fancy that they have no sin, while in reality before God they are full of filth and abomination and do sin against God's law in the worst possible way, in that they lack the fear of God and make light of his wrath, and are haughty and proud and full of presumption by reason of their own good works and their own holiness, practicing idolatry with their self-chosen service of God, in addition to the fact that their hearts are full of uncleanness and inward disobedience to God's commandments, though outwardly they keep themselves from evil works; even as we ourselves in times past while pretending to be the most pious, did provoke God to the uttermost with the horrible idolatry of the mass, the worship of the saints, and our own monkish righteousness, wherewith we thought we were earning heaven to the disparagement of Christ's death and resurrection and to the lamentable delusion of ourselves and others.

44. For this reason St. John also continues his preaching of repentance and in verse 8 says to such people, "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance," etc.; that is, take my advice and do not become secure and proud from the start, but perceive your sin and God's wrath upon you, humble yourselves before him, and implore his mercy. If ye do this not, judgment is already passed upon you, yea, the ax is already laid to the tree to destroy it, both trunk and root, as one that beareth no good fruit and is good for nothing but to be cast into the fire and reduced to ashes, notwithstanding it is so tall and sturdy and has beautiful leaves: you, namely, priding yourselves upon being Abraham's children and the like.

45. This same preaching was later continued by the apostles. St. Peter, for instance, on the day of Pentecost and thereafter pointed out to the Jews what pious children they were and how they had earned God's favor by denying his dear Son, nailing him to the cross and slaying him. And St. Paul says in Acts 17:30-31: "But now he (God) commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will

judge the world in righteousness,” etc.: that is, it is his will that all people, everywhere upon the earth, should know themselves, tremble at God’s wrath, and understand that he will judge and condemn them unless they repent and obey this preaching.

46. So Christ also says in John 16:8 that the Holy Ghost will convict the world in respect of sin, etc. (by such preaching of repentance). For, as said above, such repentance reason cannot teach, much less accomplish, by its own strength; but, as Christ here says, it must be preached as a revelation, surpassing the understanding and wisdom of reason. As St. Paul also in Romans 1:18 calls it a revelation from heaven, saying, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” etc. For no man’s reason and no lawyer will say that I am a sinner and an object of God’s wrath and condemnation if I do not steal, rob, commit adultery, and the like, but am a pious, respectable man in whom no one can find anything to reprove or censure, and I am a pious monk besides. Who would believe that I, if I be without faith, merit only God’s wrath by this fine, honorable life and that I am practicing naught but abominable idolatry with this glorious service of God and this rigid training which, without God’s command, I have undertaken of my own pleasure, and that thereby I am condemning myself to a deeper hell than others who are open sinners?

47. It is no wonder then, that, when the world hears this preaching unto repentance, whereby it is reproved, the lesser portion accepts it, while the greater masses, especially the knowing and righteous ones, despise it, toss their heads in defiance and say: Ho, how can that be true? Shall I suffer myself to be upbraided as a sinner and as an accursed man by people who come along with a new and unknown doctrine? Why, what have I done? I have surely kept myself with all earnestness from sin and have striven to do good. Shall all this be accounted nothing? Has all the world before our time been engrossed in errors? Have the lives and doings of all men been vain? How is it possible that God should take such a risk with the whole world and say they are all lost and condemned? Ha! The devil has commanded you so to preach. Thus they defend and confirm themselves in their, impenitence and by blasphemy and persecution of God’s Word heap his wrath upon themselves all the more.

48. But in spite of this such judgment and preaching ever continues and forces its way farther, as Christ here commands them simply to preach among all nations, to tell everybody, wherever they go, to repent, and to say that no one can escape God’s wrath or be saved who does not accept this preaching. That to this end he rose from the dead, that he might found this kingdom, in order that this might be preached to them who should and would be saved and might be accepted and believed by them, though it anger the world, the devil, or hell.

49. Notice, we have considered the first part of this sermon, true repentance, which convicts not only a mass of evil-doers whom all the world and the lawyers call transgressors (they, to be sure, also deserve severe punishment), but attacks the very people who in the sight of the world are the most pious and righteous, (yet are without knowledge of their sin and of Christ), and condemns them. It makes of repentance, not a work of ours, brought about by our own thinking, and partial, pertaining to only a portion of our deeds and making it

necessary for a man to search and consider a long time as to how, when, where, and how often he has sinned (although it is true that one single sin may give rise to this, as when David was reprov'd on account of adultery and murder). But repentance is a thing extending over the whole of your life and casting you all of a sudden, as by a thunderbolt from the skies, wholly and entirely under God's wrath, telling you that you are a child of hell, and terrifying your heart so that the world becomes too small for you.

50. Therefore you must make this distinction: You may refer the repentance which may be called our own work, namely our own sorrow, confession, and satisfaction, to the schools of lawyers, or to children's schools, where it may serve for discipline and outward training; but you must keep it clearly apart from the true spiritual repentance wrought by God's Word wherever and whenever this Word smites the heart making it tremble and quake at God's zealous and terrible wrath, and filling it so with dread that it knows not whither to flee.

51. Such contrition and repentance the Bible illustrates by means of numerous examples: as that of St. Paul when he was about to be converted, Acts 9:4, where Christ himself preaches repentance to him from heaven saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" etc. And presently action and power accompany the words, so that he suddenly falls to the earth trembling and says in verse 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is true contrition, not the product of his own mind; for he goes his way holding a strong conviction and assurance of his own holiness according to the law, conscious of no sin whereby he might have deserved God's wrath. But suddenly Christ shows him what he is, namely, a persecutor and murderer of Christ and of his church, a thing which hitherto he had not perceived, rather regarding his actions as manifestations of splendid virtue and of a godly zeal. Now, however, he is seized with such terror on their account as plainly indicates that with all his righteousness according to the law, he is condemned before God; and he is only too glad to hear from Christ the gracious assurance that he may obtain mercy and the forgiveness of his sins. In like manner we are told in Acts 2 how Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and thereafter and hurled this thunderbolt at the whole Jewish nation that they were betrayers and murderers of their promised Christ, the Son of God; as the text says in verse 37: "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?"

52. Behold, here too there is true repentance, which suddenly seizes the heart and fills it with mortal dread, because it feels God's wrath and condemnation weighing upon it, and begins to realize its real fault, of which it has heretofore known nothing, and is constrained to say, Ah, now what shall I do? Here is naught save only sin and wrath, a thing which hitherto, alas, I have neither known nor surmised. As St. Paul also says of the power of the Word which confronts men with God's wrath, Romans 7:9, "And I was alive apart from the law once," that is, presumptuous and secure, knowing of no sin nor of God's wrath. But when the commandment came and smote my heart then sin revived, so that I began to feel God's wrath and, thus, died; that is, I fell into fear, anxiety and despair, which I could not endure and in which I must have perished and fallen a prey to eternal death had I not again found help.

53. Now, when this has been duly preached, the other message must follow which Christ here commands us to preach, to wit, the forgiveness of sins. For it is not sufficient to speak only of sin and God's wrath and terrify the people. It is necessary, indeed, to begin one's preaching thus, so that the people may know and feel their sins and may also have a desire for grace, but this must not be our whole message, otherwise there would be no Christ and no salvation but only death and hell. Thus Judas, Christ's betrayer, made a strong enough beginning in the first part of his repentance, remorse and knowledge of his sin; yea, he was too strong on this point, because no consolation followed; so that he was unable to bear it and hurled himself forthwith into destruction and eternal death; as also did King Saul and many others. But this cannot be considered preaching aright or fully concerning repentance, as Christ would have this doctrine preached. For to this extent the devil himself is willing to serve as a preacher, though he has no call to preach, just as he is ever willing to use the name and Word of God, albeit but to deceive and work mischief. For he perverts both doctrines, comforting where comfort is not in place, or engaging solely in terrifying the people and leading them into despair. But Christ's intention is not that repentance shall be so preached as to leave the conscience in its terror-stricken state but that those who have been brought to a knowledge of their sins and are contrite in heart shall again be comforted and lifted up. For this reason he straightway adds the other part and commands us to preach not only repentance but also the forgiveness of sins. This, then, as he also says, is preaching in his name.

54. Therefore, when your conscience has become terrified by the preaching of repentance, whether it be through the spoken word or otherwise within your heart, you must remember that you are also to hear and grasp the other part Christ commanded to be preached to you, to wit: that, although you have merited eternal wrath and are deserving of hell-fire, yet God in his boundless goodness and mercy does not desire to leave you and see you perish in perdition, but he desires to forgive your sins, so that his wrath and your condemnation may be removed from you.

55. This is the comforting message of the Gospel, which a man cannot, of himself, understand as he of himself understands the preaching of the law (which was at the beginning implanted in his nature) when his heart is thereby smitten; but it is a special revelation and Christ's own peculiar voice. For human nature and reason cannot rise above the judgment of the law, which concludes and says: He that is a sinner is condemned of God. Wherefore all men would have to remain forever objects of wrath and condemnation if another and a new teaching had not been given from heaven. This teaching, in which God offers his grace and mercy to those who feel their sins and God's wrath, God's own Son himself must institute and command to be spread abroad in the world.

56. But in order that it may be apprehended and faithfully believed, this preaching must be done, as he here says, in his name; that is, not only in pursuance of his command, but also with the proclamation that sins are to be forgiven on his account and by reason of his merits. Hence we must acknowledge neither I nor any other man, with the exception of Christ, have

accomplished or merited this, nor could have merited it in eternity. For how should I be able to merit it when I and all my life and whatever I may be able to do, is, according to the first part of this sermon, condemned before God?

57. But now, if God's wrath is to be taken away from me and I am to obtain grace and forgiveness, some one must merit this; for God cannot be a friend of sin nor gracious to it, nor can he remit the punishment and wrath, unless payment and satisfaction be made. Now, no one, not even an angel of heaven, could make restitution for the infinite and irreparable injury and appease the eternal wrath of God which we had merited by our sins; except that eternal person, the Son of God himself, and he could do it only by taking our place, assuming our sins, and answering for them as though he himself were guilty of them. This our dear Lord and only Savior and Mediator before God, Jesus Christ, did for us by his blood and death, in which he became a sacrifice for us; and with his purity, innocence, and righteousness, which was divine and eternal, he outweighed all sin and wrath he was compelled to bear on our account; yea, he entirely engulfed and swallowed it up, and his merit is so great that God is now satisfied and says, If he wills thereby to save, then there shall be a salvation. As Christ also says of his Father's will, John 6:40: "This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life." Also Matthew 28:18: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." And in his prayer in John 17:1-2 he says: "Father, glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee; even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him he should give eternal life."

58. This now he has not only actually fulfilled, but he has done and accomplished it for the very purpose of having it preached and proclaimed to us; otherwise we would know nothing of it, nor would we be able to attain to it. Therefore it is absolutely unmerited on our part and is given to us entirely free and out of pure grace, and just for the reason that we may be assured of such grace and have no cause for doubt in regard to it; for indeed, we must remain forever in doubt if we were required to look for merit of our own and to seek worthiness inhering in us, till our attainments were such that God would consider them and be gracious to us on their account. But now Christ commands that forgiveness of sins be preached in his name, so that I may know that they are undoubtedly remitted unto me on account of that which he has merited, and this he reveals and communicates to me through the Word.

59. And moreover I and everyone else for his own personal good may take comfort in this, and besides no one has any cause to be troubled and worried as to whether he dare appropriate this great mercy unto himself, for it is natural for man's heart to doubt and to argue thus with itself: Yes, I can easily believe that God has elected certain great men thereto, as, for instance, St. Peter, Paul, and others, but who knows whether I too am one of those to whom he is willing to grant grace? Perhaps I have not been ordained thereto – therefore Christ wills and herewith commands that this doctrine be spread not in a corner nor to certain individuals only, yea, not even solely to the Jews, or to a few other nations at most, but throughout the whole wide world, or, as he says, to all nations; yes, as he says in Mark 16:15, to the whole creation. This Christ spoke in order that we may know that it is not his

will that anybody anywhere should be cut off or barred out from the blessings of this preaching if he is only willing to accept them and does not bar himself out, For, as the preaching of repentance is to be a general preaching and to extend over all people so that all may perceive that they are sinners, just so general shall also this preaching of forgiveness be, and it shall be accepted by all, even as all men have stood in need of it from the beginning, and will continue so until the end of the world. For, why should the forgiveness of sins be offered and preached to all if they did not all have sin? That the truth may remain as St. Paul says, Romans 11:32: “God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all,” etc.

60. Hence this preaching also calls for faith; that is, I am to conclude from it with certainty and without a doubt that for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ forgiveness of sins is granted me from the terrible wrath of God and from eternal death, and that it is God’s will that I believe this preaching, not despising the proffered grace of Christ, not casting it aside, not making the Word of God a lie. For, since he commands that this Word be preached in all the world, he therewith and at the same time demands of everyone that he receive this preaching and hold and confess it to be the invariable, divine truth, that we assuredly receive these things for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, no matter how unworthy I feel myself to be, this must not hinder nor deter me from having this faith, if only my heart be so disposed that I feel sincerely displeased with my sins and heartily desire to get rid of them. For, as such forgiveness is not offered and preached to me on account of my worthiness, for I have clearly contributed nothing, neither labored to the end that Christ should merit forgiveness for me and have it proclaimed to me as he did and does; so, on the other hand, I am not to suffer any nor be deprived of forgiveness so long as I really desire it.

61. Finally, that our comfort may abound the more, Christ here makes the following arrangement respecting this preaching of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins: It shall not be merely temporary and momentary, as it were, but shall be in continual operation, never ceasing in Christendom so long as Christ’s kingdom endures. For he wants us to have therein a lasting, eternal treasure and everlasting grace, which effectually worketh alway; so that we must not consider the forgiveness as being restricted to that one moment when the absolution was pronounced, nor as extending over previous and past sins only, as though thenceforward our works must render us perfectly clean and sinless.

62. For it is not possible in this present life on earth that we should so live as to be entirely free from sin and infirmity – not though we received grace and the Holy Spirit – owing to our sinful, depraved flesh and blood, which never ceases, this side of the grave, to bring forth evil lusts and desires, no, not in the saints; though they, on receiving grace, abstain from, and guard against, sin and resist their evil lusts, even as repentance requires; wherefore they too are still in daily need of forgiveness, even as they daily exercise themselves in repentance, by reason of these selfsame abiding infirmities and weaknesses; knowing, as they do, that their lives and works are yet sinful and merit God’s wrath (to which they would also expose them) were it not for the fact that these things are forgiven for Christ’s sake.

63. Therefore Christ has herewith instituted a kingdom on earth to be called an eternal kingdom of grace and always to be governed by the forgiveness of sins; and so powerfully it is to protect those who believe that, although sin still lurks in their flesh and blood and is so deeply rooted that it cannot, in this life, be entirely eradicated, still it shall not bring injury upon them, but be remitted and not imputed to them, provided, however, that we abide in the faith and daily make endeavors to stamp out the remaining evil lust, until it has been exterminated, and utterly destroyed by death, and has rotted away in the grave and fallen a prey to the worms, that man may arise unto eternal life perfectly renewed and cleansed.

64. Yea, even though a man who is under grace and is sanctified fall away again from repentance and faith and thus lose his forgiveness, nevertheless this kingdom of grace stands firm and unmovable, so that one may at any time be reinstated in it, if one again belong to it by repentance and conversion: in like manner as the sun rises daily in the heavens, and not only banishes the past night but proceeds without interruption to shine throughout the day, even though it be darkened and covered with thick clouds, yes, even though someone close his doors and windows against its light, still it remains the selfsame sun and, breaking all barriers down, it again and again presents itself to view.

65. Behold, this is the true doctrine of the Gospel concerning Christian repentance, laid hold of and conceived in these two parts, to wit, contrition, or a sincere alarm on account of sin, and faith in forgiveness for Christ's sake. The entire papal church has hitherto taught nothing of this; and especially have they nowhere shown any knowledge of the faith in Christ which should be the chief part of this preaching: they have only directed people to their own works, and pronounced the absolution with this proviso that we have been duly contrite and properly made confession. And thus Christ has been so entirely forgotten and ignored, and the preaching he here commands has been so utterly perverted and beclouded, that there has been no repentance and absolution in his name but in our own names and for the sake of our works of contrition, confession, and satisfaction. This I call suppressing by force the faith and knowledge of Christ, yea, exterminating it, and taking from troubled consciences their comfort, leading them alone to perish in doubt, if they are not to be certain of the forgiveness of sin until they have sufficiently tortured, and made martyrs of themselves by their self-invented and involuntary contrition and confession.

66. And so the pope and all his band have by this one thing, that they have thus perverted and corrupted the doctrine of Christian repentance and forgiveness of sin, well enough deserved, and they daily still more deserve (since besides they refuse to repent of all this error and deception, which they themselves are forced to acknowledge, but rather blaspheme and storm against the plain truth) that they be cursed by all Christians into the abyss of hell, as Paul to the Galatians curses all those who teach another Gospel, etc. Galatians 1:9.

67. Here we should also say a word on the confession which we retain and which we commend as a beneficial, salutary thing. For although, properly speaking, it is not a part of repentance, and is not necessary and enjoined, still it serves us well in receiving absolution, which is nothing else than simply the preaching and announcement of the forgiveness of

sins, which Christ here commands men both to preach and to hear. Since, however, it is necessary to retain such preaching in the church, the absolution should also be retained; for the only difference between the two is this: in the preaching of the Gospel the Word is publicly preached in a general way, to all who are present; and in absolution this same Word is spoken especially and privately to one or more who so desire it. This is in accord with Christ's institution, that such preaching of the forgiveness of sins should be carried on at all times and in all places, not only in a general way before a whole company but also before individual persons, wherever there are people who stand in need of it: as he says in the Gospel for the following Sunday, "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them."

68. Therefore we do not teach confession like the pope's theologians, that one must recite his sins, than which, according to the papists, there is no other way to confess, or that thereby one receives forgiveness and becomes worthy of absolution, as they say, On account of thy contrition and confession I declare thee free from thy sins. But we teach that one should use confession in order to hear the comfort of the Gospel and thus to awaken and to strengthen his faith in the forgiveness of sins, which is the main thing in repentance. So that "to confess" means not, as it does among the papists, to recount a long list of sins, but to desire absolution, which is in itself confession enough; that is, to acknowledge your guilt and confess that you are a sinner. And no more shall it be demanded or required that you mention by name all or several, many or few, of your sins, unless of yourself you have a desire to mention something which especially burdens your conscience and wherein you need instruction and advice or particular comfort, as is often necessary with young and inexperienced people, and also with others.

69. Therefore we commend and retain confession not on its own account but for the sake of absolution. And in confession this feature is the golden treasure, that there you hear proclaimed to you the words Christ commanded to be preached in his name to you and to all the world, so that even if you should not hear it in the confessional, still you otherwise hear the Gospel daily, which is nothing else than the word of absolution. For to preach the forgiveness of sins means nothing else than to absolve or to declare free from sin, which also takes place in baptism and in the Lord's Supper, which were also instituted for the purpose of showing to us this forgiveness of sins and assuring us of it. Thus to be baptized or to receive the communion is also an absolution, where forgiveness is, in Christ's name and at his command, promised and communicated to each one in particular. This forgiveness you should hear wherever and whenever you are in need of it, and should receive and believe it as though you heard it from Christ himself. For, because it is not our absolution but Christ's command and word, therefore it is just as good and valid as though it were heard proceeding from his own mouth.

70. Thus you see that everything that is taught concerning Christian repentance according to Scripture is wholly contained in the two parts called contrition, or alarm at God's wrath on account of our sins, and its antidote, faith that our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. For it has not been commanded that more than these two tidings be preached, to wit: the Law,

which charges us with our sin and shows us the judgment of God; and the Gospel, which directs us to Christ and proclaims God's grace and mercy in him. And, to sum up all, repentance in its entirety is just that which the Scripture describes in other words in Psalm 147:11 and elsewhere, "Jehovah taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his lovingkindness." For there these two parts are also stated: the fear of God, which proceeds from a knowledge of our sins; and reliance upon his grace, as exhibited in the promises concerning Christ, etc.

71. What the papists say concerning "satisfaction," however, is, as said above, by no means to be tolerated; for that which in former times was called satisfaction and whereof one may still read in the writings of the ancient teachers, was nothing else than an outward and public punishment of those who were guilty of manifest vices, which they were compelled to bear before men, just as a thief or a murderer in the world's courts pays for his crime on the gallows or the wheel. Of this the Scripture nowhere teaches anything, nor does this contribute anything toward the forgiveness of sin, but may, as I have said, among other temporal things, be referred to the lawyers. But their claim that God punishes sins with temporal punishments and plagues, sometimes even when they have been forgiven, is true; but that is no satisfaction or redemption from sin, nor is it a merit on account of which sin is forgiven, but a chastisement which God inflicts to urge us to repentance.

72. And even if one wished to retain the word "satisfaction" and explained it as meaning that Christ made satisfaction for our sins, it is nevertheless too weak and says too little concerning the grace of Christ and does not do honor enough to his sufferings, to which one should give higher honor, confessing that he not only has made satisfaction for sin but has also redeemed us from the power of death, the devil, and hell, and established an everlasting kingdom of grace and of daily forgiveness of the sin that remains in us; and thus is become for us, as St. Paul says in Corinthians 1:30, an eternal redemption and sanctification, as has been more fully discussed above.

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