

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A certain lawyer stood up to test the Christ. St. Luke does not report that a lawyer, desiring to learn, asked a question of the Lord, or that he sought to better understand the Lord's teaching. St. Luke records that the man desired to test the Lord. A fallen, sinful man was bold to put God to the test. And St. Luke tells us why – the lawyer wanted to justify himself.

The Lord answers in purity and truth. He answers by asking a question – seeking the lawyer's understanding of the very Words He Himself spoke to Moses in the desert. For God commanded Moses to teach His chosen people: "'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.'" Such a man is truly just.

But the lawyer, hearing those Words from the lips of God the Son, seeks a loophole. He sought to test Him. He knew what the Law required, or at least he could repeat it. But he wanted a way out. He wanted to justify himself.

The Lord answers the lawyer with earthly Words that reveal a Divine Mystery. The lawyer hears the account of the Good Samaritan, and answers rightly: the one who helped the injured man is truly his neighbor. And then the Lord gives the lawyer an impossible directive: "Go and do likewise."

What the Lord commands is impossible for the lawyer, or for any man who thinks he can justify himself. The lawyer would have counted the priest and the Levite as just men. So what the lawyer hears as self-help instruction, rules by which he can save himself, are in fact the strongest Words of Law. But in his sin, in his high self-impression, in his fatal miscalculation of his own ability, the lawyer doesn't know it, because having ears, he could not truly hear.

"Let none of you plan evil in his heart..." the Lord commands through Zechariah. That's where the problem lies – the heart. The lawyer's problem, and that of all fallen men, is the heart. That's why he was bold enough, blind enough, to believe he could justify himself.

For what man must do according to God, and what man must not do according to God, or better said – the Law – cannot save. And as proof, as your flesh hears the account of the Good Samaritan, your flesh thinks that you have found yourself in the account because you have helped others.

But consider the teaching of the Apostle: the Law was added because of transgressions. The Law shows us what we ought to do, but fail to do. If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the Law. But it wasn't. And it isn't. And it never will be. So the Good Samaritan can't be any fallen man.

The Law is perfect, holy and just. It is God's will for all men. What it describes is a flawless, ideal, complete holiness, a man no sinner can be. And so you, you who have the flesh of Adam,

have stood with that lawyer condemned, for the Law reveals your sins. You stand with the priest and the Levite on the wrong side of the road.

But do not despair. Take heart, dear Christian. For indeed the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. It is Christ who was stripped of His clothing. It is Christ that was beaten and wounded. No priest or Levite intervened. It is Christ that was left in the ditch of the garden tomb dead.

But He defeated death. And so it is Christ who comes to you, you who were dead in the ditch of your transgressions. He is the Good Samaritan. He truly has compassion. He humbled Himself to take on your flesh, to cross the road from heaven to earth, to save you from your sins. He saw your fallen state, and He had compassion, and He came to you to save you.

He who was counted as the lowest of all men, a worm and no man, suffered Himself to be wounded, that by His blood the wounds of your sins be healed. It is Christ, who took the gibbet of the cross on His own shoulders, who bore your sin, who bore you to the Inn of the Holy Church - here - where there is Divine healing, rest, and heavenly sustenance.

And it is Christ that Calls and Ordains men to serve His Church, His innkeepers. To them your Lord gives the currency of redemption - things of great heavenly value to benefit you, to preserve you, that you be fed and healed in His Church. For here is the Word of God preached, that, as the Apostle writes, the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to you who believe.

Here are sinners baptized, emerging from those waters saints by the Word and the Holy Name of God. Here the Lord who died for your sins applies that forgiveness to you as you receive Holy Absolution. These are the Balm of the Holy Church, earthly rites and elements to which God has attached His Gospel promise, that applied to you, you receive heavenly healing, and you be preserved steadfast in faith until your Lord returns.

So blessed are you, O Christian, for as the Lord promised “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.” For you see Christ in Word and Water, and you hear Christ in His Word. And as the Good Samaritan poured out healing wine in mercy, it is the same Lord that places His Blood with wine, and pours it into you, that you be healed.

The Gospel works what the Law cannot. So it is you, you saved by the Blood of Christ, you who trust in Christ for your salvation; it is you who “... love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

You receive God’s mercy, and you extend mercy to others. That’s what faith does. And by faith in Christ, it is you who inherit eternal life. For the Lord who heals you returns soon. By faith in Him, by faith in Christ who justifies you, it is you who will live.

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