

MIDWEEK OF LENT 5

March 24, 2021

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

All: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in his mercy has given his Son to die for you and for his sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, when you died, the spear through your side brought forth a sudden flow of blood and water that forgives sin, heals hurts and destroys demons. Send forth your Holy Spirit so that we benefit and are saved by these marvelous gifts; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON *Zechariah 13:1-2*

“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. And on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE LESSON *1 John 1:8 – 2:2*

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON *John 19:28-37*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the nineteenth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON

The Pine Bend Refinery is just south of the Twin Cities, if you take 52/55 toward Rochester. Have you ever passed it before? It is hard not to notice it. I often drive past this with my family in the summer months when going to visit my in-laws in Cannon Falls. Every time I pass it, I'm always intrigued by it. It is kind of a jungle of pipes, valves, switches, flashing lights, and pumps. It kind of reminds me of Tinker-toys. But, unlike Tinker-toys, the Pine Bend Refinery actually does something. It processes crude oil. Crude oil? Crude oil is oil in its natural state before it is refined into gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas, jet fuel and the like.

There *is* another kind of crude oil. It's the gunk, slime and dirt in our hearts. You know. When someone barks at us and we bark right back. When our schedule is too tight and we lose our temper. When someone gives us a piece of gossip, marinated in slander, and we pass it on—full throttle. When we see a needy child as a burden to be borne rather than a person to be loved. The gunk and slime and dirt fills our heart. Is there somewhere we can go when our hearts become so contaminated, so dirty and so polluted?

Yes! There is! We're in a series on the book of Zechariah. I'm calling today's sermon *The Redeemer's Refinery*. Jesus, our Redeemer, has set up a refinery to purify and cleanse all of the rotten and rancid stuff in our hearts. Let's dig into Zechariah 13:1 using these questions—what, why, where, how and when. *What, why, where, how and when.*

What? A fountain! “**On that day a fountain will be opened.**” (Zech 13:1) The term “fountain,” refers to a fountain of living water. Zech 14:8 promises a never-ending supply of living water!

“Living water,” though, implies that there is something called “dead water.” Dead water is the same gossip, day after day. Dead water is the same argument, day after day. Dead water is the same obsessive sin, day after day.

Zechariah promises a fountain of living water. It refines and purifies the muck and mire in our hearts. The prophet writes that this fountain is open. Open! This is great news! None of us like it when places are closed (and we know what that is like from the last year). What does it feel like when you really need some milk and you can't find a store that's open? Or when something breaks at home, and then Lowe's, Home Depot, or Walmart isn't open? It is frustrating, isn't it? Fortunately, God's refining fountain doesn't maintain business hours. It is *always* open. We can come for refining and purifying as often as needed—24-7, 365 days a year. And get this! There is no charge. The services are absolutely free!

At this point, you might be thinking, "Wait a minute, what was wrong with the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament that Zechariah promises *this fountain*? What was wrong with *all* of the sin offerings, peace offerings, freewill offerings, guilt offerings—slain bulls and lambs and goats and rams?"

The answer? Nothing. These gifts point to a greater cleansing, a greater refining. Zechariah couldn't see the whole story, but God showed him at least this much: a fountain of living water will be opened and it will forgive and refine our hearts. What? An open fountain of perfect living and cleansing water!

Let's move on to our next question, why? Let me put it this way. You've been working out in the yard on a hot summer day. Your sweaty body has attracted dirt like a magnet. You're caked with grime. You need to attend a wedding that afternoon, so you go inside, put on your best clean clothes, and head out the door.

But, wait a minute! What's missing? A shower! Nobody would just change clothes without first washing off the dirt and sweat. When you're hot and dirty, nothing feels better than a shower. This physical picture has a spiritual analogy, but there's a difference. The entire human race reeks of sin in the presence of the holy God. But because we all smell the same, we tend not to notice how foul we really smell. Many go their entire lives without sensing their need for cleansing from sin; they think they are just fine and don't need it. Others may think that their good works cover the foul odor of their sin, and so they put on their clean clothes without showering. However, one day that will be a costly mistake.

Why is there an open fountain of living water? It is because we're all dirty—really, really dirty! What pollutes us so thoroughly? Sin. Things like this: Lust—I want what I want and I want it right now. Envy—I want what you have and I want it right now. Greed—I want more of what I have and I want it right now. Sloth—I have no drive or desire and I certainly don't want to do anything with my life—right now or ever. Wrath—I'm full of anger and rage and I'm going to dump it on you right now. Pride—I'm better than you, richer than you, younger than you and smarter than you right now and forevermore! Gluttony—I'm going to indulge myself with whatever I will do it right now! Why do we need this fountain? We are filthy!

Having answered the "what," and the why, let's move on to the where. Where is the Redeemer's Refinery? Zechariah 12:10 helps us. In this verse God says, "**They will gaze upon me whom they have pierced.**" Did you catch that? God? Pierced? God pierced with what? The razor-sharp tip of a spear. And *where*? Calvary. John 19:34 describes a Roman soldier taking his spear and splitting open our Savior's side. "**There was a sudden flow of blood and water.**" Water flooding from the one whose body is blistered and burned. A gushing river of life surging from the one who hangs dead upon a tree. Living water flowing from the one who cried out, "**I thirst.**" Here is Jesus—crushed and cursed by the dirt, slime and grime of the world.

Let's review: What? A fountain that is always open for you! Why? We desperately need it! Where? Mt. Calvary. **How?** That is our next question. How does the fountain of water, gushing from our Savior's side, purge, purify and refine all of the gunk and goo in my heart? Two words. Holy Baptism!

Holy Baptism connects us to the Redeemer's Refinery! Like a conduit, baptism links us to the fountain of purifying water. Baptism deliver the gifts of Christ atonement that has been made and satisfaction for sin that is complete. Baptism announces that guilt is gone, our debt is paid, our sins are forgiven, hell is vanquished and heaven is open. Baptism empowers us to hear Christ's voice calling us back, bringing us home, and renewing our spirits so that we flee to no other refuge, build on no other foundation, and wash in no other fountain.

But this refinery won't do us any good if we look at it and think, "I wish my spouse and kids would get under that water!" You know how it goes. We might say, "Well! I may not be perfect but I'm a whole lot better than my parents ever were!" "I'm just as good as the next guy. I pay my taxes, coach Little League and every now and then I slip a few bucks into the offering plate." "Me, a sinner? Come on! I get rowdy every now and then, but Im not *that bad*. I'm better than my non-church going neighbors." Don't fall for these lines, and

this kind of thinking. Justification. Rationalization. Comparison. These are the stories of lost people. Don't become one of them!

What? An open fountain of perfect living and cleansing water! Why? We all desperately need it! Where? Mt. Calvary. How? Holy Baptism. **When?** We're missing when. When does this water flow? When does it come to me? When does it purify my polluted heart? It's because Jesus loves you so very, very, very much that his living, life-giving, soul-renewing water flows ... when? *Right now!*

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD'S PRAYER

All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICAMUS AND BENEDICTION

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. *Numbers 6:24–26*

People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” LSB 594

1 God’s own child, I gladly say it:

I am baptized into Christ!

He, because I could not pay it,

Gave my full redemption price.

Do I need earth’s treasures many?

I have one worth more than any

That brought me salvation free

Lasting to eternity!

2 Sin, disturb my soul no longer:

I am baptized into Christ!

I have comfort even stronger:

Jesus’ cleansing sacrifice.

Should a guilty conscience seize me

Since my Baptism did release me

In a dear forgiving flood,

Sprinkling me with Jesus’ blood?

3 Satan, hear this proclamation:

I am baptized into Christ!

Drop your ugly accusation,

I am not so soon enticed.

Now that to the font I’ve traveled,

All your might has come unraveled,

And, against your tyranny,

God, my Lord, unites with me!

4 Death, you cannot end my gladness:

 I am baptized into Christ!

When I die, I leave all sadness

 To inherit paradise!

Though I lie in dust and ashes

Faith's assurance brightly flashes:

 Baptism has the strength divine

 To make life immortal mine.

5 There is nothing worth comparing

 To this lifelong comfort sure!

Open-eyed my grave is staring:

 Even there I'll sleep secure.

Though my flesh awaits its raising,

Still my soul continues praising:

 I am baptized into Christ;

 I'm a child of paradise!

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