Jesu Juva

**Septuagesima**

Text: St. Matthew 20:1-16

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It seems the grace of God is never enough for men. Mankind chafes against God's grace and judges it as unfair. Is this not the temptation Satan garnished with jealousy that mankind should be like God, and since this was not the case, God was somehow being unfair for not giving to man divine equality? Is this not the temptation Satan placed before Eve and her cowardly husband Adam? And since, in their estimation, God was not forthright enough since He was not being fair enough, Adam and Eve decided to take things into their own hands and make things fair, that is, make things over in their own image. Friends, that is the sense of fairness baked into our DNA, and it is this same sense of fairness that has dwelt in the heart of every despot, tyrant, and dictator, and every autocratic government since the fall of man. Indeed, one need only look to every so-called “free” country today to witness such fairness.

Granted, a kingdom must have a king. God, after all, is a God of order. But the Kingdom of Heaven is not like the kingdoms of men. It is not a kingdom of imaginary fairness; it is, instead, a kingdom of grace and mercy. It has never been, and never will be, a kingdom of fairness. If fairness is what you seek, then you seek a different kingdom and a different king. After all, by definition, mercy is completely unfair. Mercy implies that you receive something you did not earn, something you do not deserve. And grace—well, grace means that you receive this mercy for free. Now, where is the fairness in that?

Yet, we tend to complain against God and His grace and mercy. They, it seems, are never quite enough. We would have more and so we contend with God. Our eye is evil because He is good. We complain and judge God and find Him wanting. Our eye becomes evil as we look around ourselves and covet things not given to us. We sit in the wilderness of sin and long for the forbidden fruits left behind. We long for water that will not slake our thirst. But if you knew the gift of God you would have asked Him, and He would have given to you living waters.

We complain against God when things do not go our way. We complain that we are not healthy enough. We complain that we are getting old. We complain that others make more money than we do. We want more beauty. We want more hair. We want more stuff. We fantasize and daydream about all the things we want and very seldom, if ever, do we give thanks to God that He has given to us all the things that we need in support of this body and life. We are jealous of other people, especially the rich, and we get perverse enjoyment when they are brought down and put in their place because we think that they have finally received what they had coming to them. Finally, things are fair.

You have heard me say this before, but it bears repeating. Beware! Beware because your idea of what is meet, right, and salutary, your idea of what is fair, is more like that of Satan than that of God. Therefore, if you insist on fairness, if you insist on receiving what you have earned, if you really want all that you have coming to you based on what *you* deem to be fair, then I hope you will not mind an eternity sitting in the smoking section as Satan pays out your wages with incredible fairness. He will be only too happy to pay you for each and every evil thought, word, and deed, for all you have done or left undone.

Therefore repent! Why do you tempt the Lord? How dare you believe that you can do a better job than God? Or are you unable to see that your complaints, your dissatisfaction, your discontent, are nothing more than sin against your God? Are you not able to understand that this is what your grumbling, your contending with God, means?

You see, God’s gifts are just that, they are gifts, and He gives them to whomever He wishes in the amounts that He sees fit to give, not as we might deem fair, not as our vanity, our jealousy, and our own selfish desires demand. Imagine what kind of a world this would be if we used God’s gifts as He intends them to be used, that is, if we used them to love and serve our neighbor, instead of worrying who has more.

Repent and praise God that He is so unfair, that in the Kingdom of Heaven things are done much differently than they are done in the kingdoms of men or the kingdom of hell. Praise God that He is a foolish Landowner who loves all mankind with a love beyond human understanding, so much so, that He lavishes wages on His people far beyond what they either desire or deserve.

Was it fair that God the Father should send His only begotten Son to die for us, to pay the price we could not, to receive the wages for our sin? Was it fair that Jesus should have had to absorb the wrath of God so that you could enjoy His Father’s unconditional love?

Thank God that the Kingdom of Heaven is not fair but foolish, and thank God that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. Thank and praise God that the Kingdom of Heaven is not about fairness, but about grace, about the undeserved love of God that you can neither earn nor merit.

You see, in the Kingdom of Heaven God gives to you not as your labors deserve, but as His love desires, and His love desires to give you salvation and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Therefore, instead of giving you the death your sin and the Law demand, He gives you His only-begotten Son. This is a Gift you have no right to demand or expect. It is a free gift of God's unbounded grace. With this gift you receive, as the Prophet, Isaiah tells us, *“from the Lord’s hand Double for all [your] sins.”* Therefore, *“Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, And instead of confusion [you] shall rejoice in [your] portion. Therefore in [your] land [you] shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be [yours].”*

This is the chief meaning that our Lord teaches us in today’s Gospel—we do not receive from the hand of God what we deserve; we do not receive what our sins have bought us. We deserve eternal punishment and instead, He gives to us eternal joy, salvation, and everlasting life in the forgiveness of sin. All out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness, and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on our part at all.

No, the Kingdom of Heaven is not like the kingdoms of men or Satan. God does not measure fairness as we do. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a kingdom of fairness, but the Kingdom of Grace. It is a Kingdom of God's boundless love for you and even now you have a part in His grace and mercy. For here, at this altar, is a sign of God’s fairness and love, His Body given for you, and His Blood shed for you. With this sacred meal, you have been called to the head of the line. You were last, but now you are first.

It is not fair; it is divine grace. It is the way of God and the way of His righteousness. So come and receive what you did not earn, but what He died to give you—Himself. Come and hear Jesus say, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Rev. Raymond D. Parent II

Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church

Crestview, Florida

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