

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28) – November 17, 2024

*“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time
those who are being sanctified.”*

–Hebrews 10:14–

One of the great mysteries of God’s work upon sinners in Christ crucified is that not only are the sins that we have committed in the past crucified and dead in Christ’s body (tell me the one who can understand this?), but that even those sins which are presently, plainly obvious to myself and to others, with all their consequences being meted out, are no longer mine. The Holy Spirit imputes my sins from the past, present, and future, to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the absolution. When God the Holy Spirit is proclaiming Christ and him crucified to us, the Holy Spirit is doing his primary job of making sinners holy.

The writer of Hebrews makes this remarkable claim in verse 14, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” In Christ, who was offered as a single sacrifice for all sin, once for all, you have been perfected! No doubt this perfection is very deeply hidden from our view, but that is, of course, what Paul promises, “Your life is hid in God with Christ” (Col. 3:3). But if we have been perfected in Christ Jesus, how can it be that we are still being sanctified? Was there something left to be done that Christ did not complete, this sanctifying business? There is nothing lacking in the work of Christ crucified and raised.

Luther observes in his explanation to the third article of the Creed of the Large Catechism, that we would never hear of Christ nor believe in him if the Holy Spirit did not proclaim the gospel to us. The faith in Christ created in us is the perfected creature of which verse 14 speaks. Our holiness is in heaven where Christ is (Phil. 3:20). At the same time, we are sinners in ourselves, under the burden of the law and its ceaseless demands. This old sinner is the one whom God is sanctifying, not by cajoling the old Adam or Eve in the law all the more, but by the daily repentance and forgiveness that shapes our everyday life through our vocations.

Those who are being sanctified are so by being justified, daily, through the forgiveness of sins, not by the sacrifice of piety and love, but by the announcement, “You sin is forgiven.” And when God forgives your sins, he has Divine Amnesia: “I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more.” You may have a hard time forgetting your sins. Others may remind you of your many offenses. The devil loves to torment us with our trespasses. But for you, the comfort is that for God, whatever was put to death and buried with Christ remains locked up in the grave forever. And more than that, he has clothed you with the righteousness of his Son and given you all that belongs to him. For where there is the forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation.

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28) – November 17, 2024

*“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time
those who are being sanctified.”*

–Hebrews 10:14–

One of the great mysteries of God’s work upon sinners in Christ crucified is that not only are the sins that we have committed in the past crucified and dead in Christ’s body (tell me the one who can understand this?), but that even those sins which are presently, plainly obvious to myself and to others, with all their consequences being meted out, are no longer mine. The Holy Spirit imputes my sins from the past, present, and future, to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the absolution. When God the Holy Spirit is proclaiming Christ and him crucified to us, the Holy Spirit is doing his primary job of making sinners holy.

The writer of Hebrews makes this remarkable claim in verse 14, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” In Christ, who was offered as a single sacrifice for all sin, once for all, you have been perfected! No doubt this perfection is very deeply hidden from our view, but that is, of course, what Paul promises, “Your life is hid in God with Christ” (Col. 3:3). But if we have been perfected in Christ Jesus, how can it be that we are still being sanctified? Was there something left to be done that Christ did not complete, this sanctifying business? There is nothing lacking in the work of Christ crucified and raised.

Luther observes in his explanation to the third article of the Creed of the Large Catechism, that we would never hear of Christ nor believe in him if the Holy Spirit did not proclaim the gospel to us. The faith in Christ created in us is the perfected creature of which verse 14 speaks. Our holiness is in heaven where Christ is (Phil. 3:20). At the same time, we are sinners in ourselves, under the burden of the law and its ceaseless demands. This old sinner is the one whom God is sanctifying, not by cajoling the old Adam or Eve in the law all the more, but by the daily repentance and forgiveness that shapes our everyday life through our vocations.

Those who are being sanctified are so by being justified, daily, through the forgiveness of sins, not by the sacrifice of piety and love, but by the announcement, “You sin is forgiven.” And when God forgives your sins, he has Divine Amnesia: “I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more.” You may have a hard time forgetting your sins. Others may remind you of your many offenses. The devil loves to torment us with our trespasses. But for you, the comfort is that for God, whatever was put to death and buried with Christ remains locked up in the grave forever. And more than that, he has clothed you with the righteousness of his Son and given you all that belongs to him. For where there is the forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation.