

✠ Luke 14:1-14 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

One word should describe Christians as this one word describes our God and Lord, Jesus Christ: merciful.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? By all means, for healing merciful and against mercy there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23). The Pharisees know this. They're not stupid. They must know that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. But they're too proud to admit it. They know Jesus is doing nothing wrong but if they admit as much then they can't be better than Him. If He is right then they are wrong and in need of His forgiveness. They know it's not illegal but they say nothing. Cowards!

Despite their knowledge, despite their knowledge of the Scriptures, they remain in their sin. They won't listen to and obey the Master, and so they remain in their sin. They remain in the dark, groping about with unseeing eyes. They're too proud to repent. Too proud to confess their sins. They would rather face the terrors of hell than to humble themselves.

What foolishness. It seems so obvious to us. It seems so obvious that we can hardly believe that they actually behaved in this way. Who in their right mind would be so stubborn and foolish to risk eternal death than to admit they're wrong? They remained silent even though they knew the truth. But we're no better. We remain silent when we should be speaking the truth.

We have watched our families and friends be torn apart defending half-truths and blatant lies, but we're too afraid to call a spade a spade. We'd rather let bygones be bygones even though we never forget and bring up the juicy morsel of gossip whenever it suites our purposes. We'd rather turn a blind eye to sin rather than encouraging our brothers and sisters to confess and be healed.

Besides, if we went around telling others that they should confess or what sins they should repent of, they would in turn show us our blemishes and leprous flesh. That's too personal, too ugly. So we hide behind what we call good advice, quoting Jesus saying, "Why look for the speck in your brother's eye when there's a log in your own." We think we're being humble and not judging, but all we're really doing is trying to avoid an uncomfortable situation. We can be humble and nonjudgmental when it suites our purposes. We'd rather suffer anything than create a scene or be labeled a fanatic.

So we treat live-in boyfriends like proper in-laws even though they are mistreating our sisters and daughters. We ignore the drinking habits of others even though we see the devastation it causes to them and those who love them. We cowardly let others distort God's Word by saying it's none of our business, or justifying our inaction by saying, "We've all got something wrong with us." Anything but the Truth. Numb, dumb, and afraid, we enable and engage in the worst sins of men. Silent when the truth needs to be spoken, and offended and aghast when someone speaks it; more concerned with how men see us now than how God will see us on Judgment Day. More worried about publicity than about our souls. But all we're really doing is letting our brother or sister drown and die in their sin rather than bringing

them to Jesus to be healed.

Repent. It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. He laid in the grave silent for thirty-nine hours, including every second of the Sabbath. While He was there there were no defenders of the faith, no confessors; no apostles to tell the Truth. All the world was silent. Those would be apostles hid in fear of His enemies. It seemed as though the Pharisees had won. They had shut God up and His Bride remained silent. They thought, "Now, no one will dare to heal, no one will dare to speak against our lies again." They thought they had won. We have sometimes acted like they did. But they did not. The Law is now full

Eight days after the Hosannas and "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," and three days after the Pharisees thought they'd won, the light shone forth from inside the tomb. The Father woke the Son. The seal was broken and the stone would praise Him rather than keep Him in the grave. The guards were speechless. Their lies and heresies were mute in the presence of the eternal Word. Their mockery and blasphemy no longer has a voice. They are dead. He is risen! They are humbled. He is exalted. He has won. One day every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord!

That is the great truth: that Jesus died and rose to reconcile sinners through the Spirit to His Father. There is no other truth, no other doctrine. From this truth flow all matters of faith. That is why we cannot keep silent. That is why we must raise our voices against sin and in praise of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ. It is too urgent, too important. We must warn those still caught in the web of death, enslaved to lust, greed, and violence.

The world wonders why we continue to preach against it. It doesn't so much care that we preach against murder or abuse. But it hates the truth and so hates when we preach against its pet sins, its victimless sins. After all, why do we care what two consenting adults do? Why can't the Church let them have their fun? Because it is wrong. It is sin. It is a lie and it hurts. It kills. There is no such thing as a victimless sin. At best it only condemns the sinner; at worst it drags others down with him. We must preach the Word of God.

Should we be silent? Should we look the other way, afraid of what they may think of us or do to us? No! It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath! There is no better way, no other way. Jesus is the only way. He is the only way to healing and restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. He is the only way to life.

Be humbled in the cross of Jesus Christ. Let the world scoff at you. Let them mock you. But do not let the dropsy, the sin, go unanswered. Don't be intimidated by the lying mouths of the Pharisees, for their tongues stick to the roof of their mouths, and their voices have been silenced. They did not win. Speak the truth. It will scatter the darkness and some will believe and thank you for it. God has loved men in His Son. Proclaim the goodness of God and tell the sinner he or she can come home. God is not mad at them. He loves them.

This is true also for you. Hypocrisy, cowardice, and pettiness, the favorite sins of God's children, notwithstanding. In His Son, God has forgiven and forgotten them too. God has shown you mercy by exalting you. He has invited you to His wedding feast and given you a place of honor. He lifts you off your knees to the highest place on earth. The place where He dwells in Flesh hidden in bread and is joined to His people. He places Himself inside you, making His home with you, reconciling you to His Father. You are the temple of the Most High.

Weak, blind, cowardly, and silent, you are not worthy. You have no right to be here. You cannot repay Him. But it is not a mistake. He did not die in vain. He does not invite you unintentionally. He bids you to come and be His honored guest. He is worthy to invite you. He knows what He is doing. The invitation is valid and real and makes you who are unworthy, worthy. Ask not, "Why me?" The answer is not in you. That question was designed by the devil. Christ's invitation, that is all that matters. His death and resurrection are enough. They are worthy. Here He says, "Friend, go up higher, for I have prepared a place for you." His mercy endures forever.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠