

✠ Luke 9:51-62 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

Do you renounce the devil?

Do you renounce all his works?

Do you renounce all his ways?

What say you, O man? Do you renounce the works of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like? For you have been warned, sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. Galatians 5:19-21).

Is that too much? Is it too harsh and difficult? Does it offend you to be asked such questions, or rather, to answer such questions? Do you think, “I don’t believe God is that mean. I’m not evil, just human. Besides, let he who has no sin cast the first stone.” Very good. We shall let Him who is without sin cast that stone. Let us see what Jesus has to say. Ah, yes. “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head. Follow me, and let the dead bury their own.”

Not exactly a reprieve, is it? Jesus doesn’t say, “Oh never mind all that religious stuff. Never mind listening to my Word or drowning your sins by confessing them, just make sure you’re true to yourself and that you lead a basically good life, then no matter what you do, as long as you don’t think it’s too bad and can somehow justify your actions, I’ll feel good about you and you’ll feel good about me. And in the end, we’ll all be alright.”

Rather the Lord Jesus tells it as it is. The wily, crafty fox builds its den in your heart where it makes its home and gives birth to its offspring. The wild birds of the air that eat rotten flesh and feed their young with their own vomit build their nests in your soul and make their home with you. But the Son of Man has no place to lay His head. There is no room for the Son of Man in the heart that is full of the desires of the flesh. There is no resting place for the Son of Man in the heart that houses the wickedness of the devil who lies when he opens his mouth, speaking his native tongue (John 8:44).

And what about the one who says, Lord, I’ll follow you, but first let me ... fill in the blank. First let me do what? Anything that is put into this blank is automatically contrary to the God’s will. Anything that takes precedence over following and listening to Jesus is idolatrous. For anything put into this blank ultimately says, “Let me first satisfy the desires of my flesh.” What else is there? The words, “First let me...” nullify the otherwise pious words of “Lord, I’ll follow you.” As our Lord says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Luke 11:23). Whatever excuse there is that keeps you from following Jesus, from gathering with Jesus, it is not good enough.

For our Lord has not left you to yourself, but He Himself has baptized you. He has marked

you with His name and Spirit, and makes His home with you by force. As He says, “the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcefully urged into it” (Luke 16:16). So it is that the Lord Jesus says to you, “Follow me. Follow me to the cross where your sins and desires of the flesh are crucified. Follow me into the grave so that you can follow me out of the tomb. For I have freed you from damnation. I have freed you from sin.”

Thus was Keeley drowned; thus are you drowned in the waters of holy Baptism. Your wicked and perverse nature has had its head held under the holy waters of God until it ceases to move, killed along with all sins and evil desires. Therefore, O Christian, stand firm in your freedom from damnation, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1), satisfying the desires of your flesh by neglecting the Word of God and living a life contrary to it, thereby profaning the name of God.

Or do you not know, brothers and sisters, that whoever puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God? That is, whoever has been called, baptized by God, yet moves to satisfy the desires of the flesh will no longer be free but will once again be bound by sin and death, shame and damnation. As it is written, “If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth ... [and] ... Whoever says ‘I know Him’ but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 1:6; 2:4).

Therefore cling to the promises of God in Christ, that for His sake your sins are forgiven. For it is also written, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ... [and] ... whoever keeps His word, in Him truly the love of God is perfected” (1 John 1:9; 2:5). Do not abhor your adoption as sons and daughters of God made sure by the washing of new birth in the Holy Spirit, but fall prostrate before Him, praising Him for His mighty deeds and great mercy.

For our Lord desires you. He is not willing to share you with the evil one or to loose you to your sins, but wants you all to Himself. Like a jealous lover, our Lord covets you and moves heaven and earth to have you. You are His bride, His chosen one, and He will not let you go. He will gather you to Himself, like a hen gathers her chicks, and will feed you with His own body and blood.

Therefore cry out, “Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge” (Psalm 16:1). You cannot preserve yourself. You cannot think enough good thoughts. You cannot do enough good deeds. You cannot make enough excuses to hide the sins of your flesh. But God has done enough for you.

It is enough that the Son of God died the death of a sinner, your death. It is enough that Jesus has borne on His back your sins and faults, lusts and shame. It is enough that Jesus has covered your sins under the holy water, breathing into you His Spirit whereby you are made a child of God, an heir to the kingdom. It is enough that our Lord gives you His flesh to eat and blood to drink, satisfying the hunger and thirst for righteousness. Our Lord is enough.

For He makes known the path of life; in His presence there is fullness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:1, 11).

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

✠ AMEN ✠