

✠ Matthew 4:12-25 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached (Luke 16:16). The good news of the kingdom of God, the gospel of the kingdom, is this: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Repent of everything. Drop it all. It is all evil. It is all useless. It is all wicked. It is all condemned. No one is righteous. There are none who fear God. All have turned aside and chased after false gods.

Through one man, Adam, all have sinned and all are guilty of unrighteousness and all are to collect the wages of sin. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one seeks after God.

All of this Scripture tells us. Yet we do not believe it. We believe that we seek after God. We believe that we do the work of God. We believe that we are righteous and good. We believe that we can strengthen our faith by what we do or do not do. We believe that we have repented, and so do not need to do so again. Repent. For God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

But we measure our goodness by our actions. We think of ourselves as good when we go to church or when we mow our neighbor’s lawn or when we take dinner to a sick friend. Yet even in these we sin. We don’t mean to. But we do. We can’t help it. We can’t help feeling pride at doing good works. We can’t help thinking that we’re basically good people when we get so many compliments from our family and friends about how thoughtful and good we are.

We are born of the flesh of Adam; born in his image and in his likeness. We are sinners and so everything we do is tainted with sin. The acts themselves may not be sinful. Parenting is not sinful for God created parents and children and blesses the family. But because we are sinful, our parenting is sinful. The same is true of everything we do.

It is like jumping into water. You are not wet in and of yourself, when you are not in the water. But as soon as you jump in, then you cannot help but be wet. Once you’re in the water, everything you do is wet. So it is with sin. You are conceived in sin, sinful from conception, and so everything you do is tainted with sin.

But it is not like a blot or blemish that can be whitewashed or covered or ignored. Rather, it is all-invasive. The good you want to do you do not do and the evil you seek to avoid, that you do (Romans 7). It is like ink in water. Water is not ink, but once the ink is in the water, there is no separating the ink from the water. The water is stained, tainted.

This truth is only revealed to you by the Holy Spirit. Man does not see himself as sinful. At worse, man sees himself as selfish, but then that is justified by saying it is an instinctual condition needed for survival. If you were not selfish you would not survive. Thus, science and the humanities make great leaps to show that we are simply a blip on the screen of evolution. If we’re hardwired this way, then we are not sinful, only natural. But God did not

create humans to sin. Repent.

Of course, the reason man seeks to justify himself – whether by evolution or by good works – is because the Law of God is written on our hearts. Man naturally feels bad about his actions because God's Law is there accusing him. As it is written, "their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" (Romans 2:15).

And we are so blinded by sin that we try and appease the Law. We know we've done something wrong, hurt our neighbor or lied to our spouse, and so we try and do something to make up for it. We bring our wife flowers or we mow our neighbor's yard. We buy our kids toys and gadgets to make up for our failures as parents, and by doing so, we try to buy ourselves clean consciences. "Yes, I've screwed up, but I've paid for my mistakes and I've tried to make amends." Repent. God paid for your mistakes.

In the medieval church, such actions that tried to counter sin were called penance. Five Hail Mary's and two Our Father's would make up for a host of sins. One pilgrimage to St. James' bones would clear many sins and maybe even free a loved one from purgatory. We may laugh and mock these superstitions now, but we have our own. We should be careful not to judge.

We come to church more often than not because we think that by coming to church we're doing a good work, making up for sins and pleasing God, appeasing His wrath. We read our Bible in hopes that by so doing we will make up for all the cursing we've done and all the lust we've entertained. We try to clothe ourselves in humility to try and pay for all the times we've been judgmental or hurt our family and friends. We may not make pilgrimages to Rome, but we certainly purchase the indulgence of putting money in the offering plate or holding offices in the church. Thinking that we achieve some level of goodness for the works we do.

And by so doing we think we have repented. We think that feeling sorry for our sins and doing something to try and counter them is repenting. But it is not. Anyone can do acts of charity. Anyone can come to church or feed a child. Anyone can feel sorry for the wrongs they've done to others. In fact, everyone does. For the Law is written on our hearts and the Law demands action, retribution and justice.

Tit for tat, an eye for an eye. And so you try and make up for the wrongs you've done, the sins you've committed. But you can't because you are a child of Adam. You can't make up for anything. In fact, in trying to make up for it you make it worse because you believe the lie that says you can appease the wrath of God. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Repent of everything. Drop it all. It is all evil. It is all useless. It is all wicked. It is all condemned. Leave your fishing boats and fishing nets. Leave your father and follow Jesus. Why are you trying to make up for a life of sin? You can't do it. Repent. Leave it all behind and follow Jesus. That is true repentance.

Leave your sin of unbelief and your sin of self-promotion. Leave your sin of doing good works to make you feel good about yourself. Leave your doing things to make up for past sins. Works do not please God. Sacrifices and offerings He does not desire, but a broken and contrite heart He will not despise. Leave your life and follow Christ, for the kingdom of God is at hand.

In the kingdom of heaven, your sins are forgiven. Not just the one's you know about or

the one's that are mythical and common to all. But your life is forgiven. Your life is renewed and washed in the cleansing waters of the Holy Spirit. The life you lead is not your own but belongs to your Savior, to Jesus. Walk in this repentance, a constant turning over of your life to Him. He destroys your old life, the life you lived for you, and leads you in His paths of righteousness and innocence, for His name's sake.

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

✠ AMEN ✠