**Sermon Transcript Sixth Sunday of Easter Rogate, May 12, 2021**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. All right, so we have some wonderful, wonderful text. First off, let's just touch on the Old Testament lesson. The people of Israel; what a joyful people. They're just, all these people that you just want to love and cherish because they're so generous, and kind, and complaining, and arguing, and doubting God all the time. I love them because they give me hope, because if God has enough patience with these people to save them, then there's hope for me.

Now, these people are in the wilderness. They've just been saved by God. They went through the Red Sea. God destroyed the Egyptian army behind them. He leads them with a pillar of fire, and a pillar of smoke, and He guides them on the way. He gives them this manna, this miraculous bread from Heaven. And what happens when they have to take a little bit of a detour to go around the nation of Egypt? What do they do? They grumble. They complain. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt into this wilderness? There's no food, there's no water and we hate this worthless food."

If there's no food and there's no water, then what in the world are you talking about, about this worthless food? This is the food that comes from Heaven and miraculously appears every single day. It nourishes them and sustains them in the wilderness and yet, they describe it as worthless. Why? Because they're tired. Because they don't want to do what they are supposed to do. Because they need to go a little bit further around. Because they're bothered and inconvenienced by the things that are going on. And so they started calling this miraculous food from God worthless food.

Then let's look at the disciples. This is Jesus continuing His conversation of the discourse in the upper room, so right before the night in which He was betrayed. And Jesus is talking to His disciples and says, "Look, you're not going to ask Me for anything because you can ask directly to the Father in My name and He will give it to you." And they say, "Ah, now you're speaking plainly." Really? After three years, three years of being with Jesus day in and day out, of Him speaking in parables and then explaining the parables to the disciples. Three years of watching Him talk to every single Pharisee and scribe and Sadducee.

And they ask Him questions and He gives them these profound answers so that everybody's mouth is shut up. They finally say, "Ah, now You're speaking plainly. Now we know that You don't need to be questioned." Really? After three years of watching You shut every critic's mouth up, you still are trying to figure out what's going on. And they "see plainly now" and know that He comes from God. They finally got it figured, "Oh yeah, we know that You come from God. We got it figured out." And then what does Jesus say? "There comes a time. In fact, the hour is right now."

Later on tonight, in essence, is what He's saying. You guys are going to split. You're going to vanish into the night and I'm going to be left alone. You understand what's going on? No, you don't have a clue. Again, the disciples give me hope because if God can use... Do you ever wonder how in the world the gospel ever went beyond these 12 guys? They seem absolutely clueless. They seem to put their foots in their mouth so many times. I mean, Peter, "I will never abandon You God. If everybody else has failed, but I never will." And he's the one that blatantly denied Jesus three times.

Thomas, "Let us go into Jerusalem and die with Jesus." He's gone into the wood. He doesn't show up. He doesn't even show up with the rest of the disciples the first time they gather on that Sunday when they're gathered together. It takes him another week before he gets back into the groove of things. How in the world does the Gospel ever get beyond these 12 people? It's only because of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Again, last week we talked about Him sending the Holy Spirit. This is a continuation of that conversation that Christ sends the Holy Spirit.

He gives us that power and that authority through His death and resurrection, through an understanding given to us through the Spirit, that we can then go to God and ask Him for whatever we need, and He will give it to us. And it's the same thing in the Old Testament. When God gets frustrated with Israelites, He sends these fiery serpents. Now, they're not literally fiery serpents. They're serpents that have poison and it feels like fire going through your veins when you get bit. So, He sends these serpents into the camp.

They bite them. People start dying and suddenly they go, "Oh wait, sorry. We sinned against You and against Moses. Please, please pray to God and ask Him to get rid of these snakes." Now, it's interesting He does not get rid of the snakes. He does, however, provide a means by which the snakes will no longer kill them. He has Moses build a pole and put a bronze serpent on the pole. And whoever looks at that bronze serpent will live. Why?

Because the bronze serpent had some magical powers that somehow exuded into their lives. No, but because God said, "Look, and you will be saved." They believed the Word of God and they looked, and they were saved. It's all about faith, trust in the Lord. Why do they trust in the Lord? Because they finally figure out after tribulation and trials that, "Hey, maybe we should try God. Maybe God actually knows what He's talking about, and maybe He can actually provide something for us." And so, they turned to the Lord and they ask Him, and He saves them.

And this is what Jesus is talking about. He talks about that we can ask anything in His Name, and He will give it to us because the Father loves us. Now, isn't that the Father... Remember last week, we were talking about how God's wrath and anger was turned away. Isaiah was prophesying that God's wrath and anger would be turned away by the Messiah coming. That He might take the punishment that we deserve rightfully upon Himself so that God's anger can turn away from us and to Christ so that He might comfort us again. Why in the world does God want to comfort us?

We've rebelled against Him in thought, word and deed. He wants to comfort us because He loves us. He loves us. Now, I want you to then look at our Catechism. So, I told you to mark your page 323 (in the Hymnal). Look at what it says about the Father on the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer. Now we're going to read the definition together so get that out and be ready. "Our Father who art in Heaven," what a miraculous idea that is that He is our Father. So, what does this mean? What does it really mean? And let us recite together. What does this mean?

“With these words, God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true father, and that we are His true children. So that with all boldness and confidence, we may ask Him, as dear children asked their dear father.” What a beautiful image that is that God wants us to know that we are His children. And as His true and real children, He wants us to think of Him as a real and true Father. And to then, as a result, ask Him with all boldness and confidence as any dear child asks his dear father.

Now, the image we get is of this three- or four-year-old, who is confident that their dad knows all and can do all. That changes about 13 or 14, but we're talking about young kids now. They ask their father, and they just trust that the father's got it figured out. "Dad, can you do this? Dad, I need this. Dad, I want this," and they're just confident that dad can do it all. I hate to disillusion them, but God never does. He can and does all things. Why? Because He is our dear Father, and He loves us.

The Father loves us. That same Father, whose wrath was turned away. The Father loves us. And so, we can ask Him. And in fact, God wants us to ask Him for all the little things, the itty bitty things in our life. "God, I'm dealing with this hardship. Please, God, I need this. You know, I need that." I need whatever we've called little and big. Nothing is too small that the Father isn't interested because it's our lives, and nothing is too big that He can't handle. He tells us, "Ask Me." He wants us to ask Him so that we might put our trust in Him and turn our eyes to look at Him, where our hope and our salvation is found.

Now James says, "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only." How are we to do that? Well, in the midst of all of this we're to trust Him, we're to remember the law, but that is summed up in this. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. By show of hands. No, really don't show your hands. But how many of us have been unable to bridle our tongue?

How many of us have ever said a word in anger that we immediately knew we shouldn't have said and wished we could take back? How many of us have let our tongue accuse people, and disparage people, and speak ill of people? Those same people who are children of God dearly loved by Him as well. We can't even control our tongue yet alone do anything good for God. How do we then become doers of the Word and not hearers only? It begins with the tongue. So, to become a doer of the Word first requires us to be active in prayer.

To seek the will of God in our very lives in everything that we do, everything that we say, and everything that we think. To use our tongue to praise God and to thank Him for the gifts that He has given to us. To use our tongue to ask God for all that we need to support this body in life. To use our tongue to ask and pray that God would use us as His faithful witnesses like He used those foolish and idiotic disciples, who didn't seem to have a clue what was going on.

But with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit loosened their tongues and enabled them to speak with power and might so that thousands turned to the faith in Jesus Christ. To become a doer of the Word first requires that we understand what that Word is, and we use that Word properly, and the way we use it properly is in prayer to pray to God that He might strengthen us and nourish us. To pray to God that He might give us those things that are needful. To pray to God when things go wrong, that He might help us and strengthen us through the journey.

To pray to God in all circumstances. To pray, praise and give thanks, as Luther again says elsewhere in the Catechism, because what does it say? How does Jesus end this section? "I've said these things to you that in Me, you may have peace." Why? Because everything goes smoothly and there are no problems? No. In the world you will have tribulation. Jesus says it upfront. This isn't some Pollyanna pie in the sky faith that, oh, if you believe life will be wonderful, and joyful, and lollipops, and clouds and nothing is going to ever go wrong, no.

In this world, you will have tribulation. We live in a fallen world and there is pain and suffering, both out there and in here. And the only way that we have peace is in Christ. Taking our eyes and looking to the Son of God, who takes away the sin of the world. See, when we pray, we learn that in the midst of tribulation, we can have peace because we can take heart because Christ has overcome the world, has overcome all the tribulations and trials that will go on. Now, we need to know that because this world is getting worse.

We've already read of a pastor in Finland, who was arrested because they stood on the biblical truth. And we've also heard in Canada, a pastor was arrested because he held the worship services when he was told not to. We are in a time where it's no longer inconceivable that there might be tribulation, and trials, and persecution of the people of God here in America. Had I said that two years ago, I think everybody would have thought I was crazy, but now it's not beyond the realm of imagination. There will be tribulation, and trial, and possibly even persecution. But take heart, even in that, take heart, I have overcome the world.

Because how did those disciples communicate the Gospel? They were steeped in the Word of God. They were steeped in prayer. They asked for God to give them the strength to persevere and to proclaim the Gospel in truth and purity no matter what befell them personally. No matter what trials or tribulations they faced. No matter how hard it physically got. They knew with absolute certainty by the power of the Holy Spirit, that in the midst of the tribulation, they had peace in Christ, because their sins were forgiven, and they were children, dear children, of God.

That is how we become doers of the Word by steeping ourselves in His Word and by regularly and in every circumstance, praying to God that He might guide, and direct us, and give us understanding so that we might be prepared, in season and out, to give witness to the faith that we have in Christ Jesus. So that we might be prepared to share the joy of our salvation with our friends, our family, our neighbors, and even our enemies. Even the world that threatens to persecute us and bring tribulation upon us. Prayer is how we become doers of the Word. It starts and ends with prayer. Only then can we know that God is with us, and that peace which surpasses all understanding.

So let us steep our lives in prayer. And if you need a place to start, you can look elsewhere in the scripture or in our Catechism, we have a section of Daily Prayers on Page 294 (in the Hymnal) for morning and evening. We have then later, on Page 305 (in the Hymnal), Prayers, Intercessions and Thanksgivings. There's an opportunity, this speaks of all the different aspects of our lives. From our religious life, to our civic life, to the life that we have when we are in need and want. It's all there. Prayers are filled.

The hymnal is filled with prayers that we might be praying at all times because in prayer we become doers. And by doers, we become proclaimers of the grace of God that others might look to the Cross, and be healed, and saved from their sin. May that grace, and mercy, and peace of God, and the love of Our Father be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.