

On Earth As It Is In Heaven

12th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, Proper 16[a] August 27, 2017

MATTHEW 16:13-20

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

Jesus wants you to know what is being said in Heaven about you.

Jesus knows your life even better than you do. He knows what your gifts are—he gave them to you, he knows your weaknesses even better than you do, your temptations; he knows those things troubling you, those things you wish you could ignore, those bringing shame, he knows all that belongs to your name.

Jesus knows our weaknesses even better than we do, because, although you and I may know our weaknesses, we can deceive ourselves. We trick ourselves in thinking that, yes, we are sinners, but there is a reason for our sin, or at least for some of our sin, so it's not as bad as it might seem. Or we deceive ourselves that our sin is somehow less than a violent affront to Holy God. Or we look at some of our sins, those sins easily seen, and we don't examine ourselves for other more hidden sins, or don't examine ourselves for the real problem, our heart of sin.

None of this is hidden to Jesus, the Son of the Living God. He knows our lives even better than we do, and he wants us to know what is being said about us in Heaven.

Because, in Heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are conversing.

From this conversation of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, came our creation, when they said to one another, *Let us make man in our own image*, and, as Scripture tells us,

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

[Genesis 1:27]

Then when the male and the female, the image of God on Earth, Adam and Eve—when they forfeited the image of God by taking things not given to them in creation, then the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit spoke some more.

In the visitation to Abraham where he was given the promise of a Savior, they spoke; in the burning bush, where the promise was given to Moses, they spoke; to Elijah in the cave they spoke; to Isaiah they spoke; at many times and in various ways in times past, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets.

But now he speaks by his Son, through whom he created the world, and by whom he now speaks to us in these latter generations.

So Jesus wants us to know what is being spoken about us in Heaven. Matthew 16:19:

[Jesus said,] **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”**

Sins released on Earth are released in Heaven. Sins not released on Earth are not released in Heaven. Heaven and Earth—but it’s the same conversation in both.

It’s the same conversation because it’s the speaking of Jesus, and he is the Son of the Living God. He

speaks to his Father in Heaven; he speaks also to sinners here on Earth.

He used to speak to sinners here on Earth through the mouth of the prophets, then he came in the flesh, and spoke to sinners on Earth by his own mouth, as he traveled around Galilee on his way to the cross.

Then, having atoned for all sins on the cross, he ascended to Heaven, where, from Heaven, he now speaks to sinners here on Earth in the proclamation of his Gospel.

But it is the same conversation: God the Son speaking to his Father in Heaven to justify the sinner, and God the Holy Spirit bringing that conversation down to you and me in the Gospel, so that we are given to know the fullness of all which Jesus wants us to know.

And what Jesus wants the sinner on Earth to know is, *I forgive you your sin*. He wants the sinner to know that in his Word of forgiveness here on Earth, we find our knowledge and certainty that he has released our sins before the Father in Heaven.

He wants the sinner to know that to the Church he has given the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, and the keys are nothing other than the declaration of the forgiveness of all sin, of the removal of all guilt, of the release of all shame.

And Jesus wants you and me to know that when we hear that word of forgiveness and removal and release here on Earth, we have heard what the verdict in Heaven is regarding us.

Hearing his Word of promise, hearing the Gospel of forgiveness, hearing the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, hearing Jesus give his Name in Baptism, hearing him give himself to sinners in his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of all sin, we are hearing the deliberations of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit in Heaven.

And for the sinner, it is the deliberation of grace; it is the conversation to restore and reconcile the sinner, and to call the sinner out of death and darkness into his marvelous light of life.

Some sins may be retained. That is death. But the sins retained are retained not because Jesus didn't atone for them with his blood, he did.

The sins retained and not forgiven are not because Jesus has not proclaimed his Gospel for all; he sent it forth to be proclaimed to every nation and tongue in the world.

The sins retained are not because Jesus somehow just ran out of patience and left the sinner to die. The sins are retained where the sinner turns from the Gospel, where the sinner wants to hide sins and deal with them himself, where the sinner thinks he needs no Savior, for he can justify himself. Those sins are retained. But not because Jesus would have it so.

For Jesus desires all sinners to be saved and to come to the knowledge of his salvation. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. [see 1 Timothy 2:4]

So Jesus, who intercedes to his Father for us in Heaven, teaches us to pray to the Father, *Let your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.*

The will of the heavenly Father is that the sinner hear the Name of his Son, and at the Name of Jesus, the sinner would find his salvation.

So Jesus, sent from the Father, sends the Apostles out to forgive sins on Earth, knowing that by that same word the sins are released also in Heaven. Then Jesus, before ascending to Heaven, tells the Apostles that his Father has given to him all authority in Heaven and on Earth, and they are now to baptize sinners into that salvation, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So we here, this morning, are given to hear the conversation of Heaven.

From the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit has proceeded, and in the Word of Gospel has brought to little Evelyn Nicole and to Charles the gift of Baptism.

In that gift, the Name spoken in Heaven has been bestowed here on Earth, so that as Evelyynn Nicole and Charles go forth, into whatever life may have in store for them, they go forth as those belonging to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as those bearing the holy Name, as those forgiven of every sin, removed of every guilt, released of every shame, by the blood of Jesus, who is the Christ of the Living God.

This verdict of the forgiveness of sin is decreed in Heaven. It is brought to you and me in the promise of the Gospel. In the Gospel of life, in the Sacraments of salvation, you now know what is spoken about you in Heaven. And we, in great joy, pray to our Father, *Let your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.