

Sustained in the Mercy of Our Lord

Jude 20-25

[20] But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, [21] keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. [22] And have mercy on those who doubt; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

[24] Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, [25] to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. -In the Name of Jesus.

We confessed this morning in the Nicene Creed that *“He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead”* and as we end the church year, our readings this morning point us to the Second Advent, or Second Coming of our Lord, who promises to return again. Much is often discussed today about the Second Coming of Jesus in our culture, as books, movies, studies all speak and speculate on our Lord’s return, unfortunately describing it more of a science fiction movie than the words of our Lord. What we need to know, and what our Lord gives about His Second Coming, however was all given in His first coming, where the work of salvation was accomplished on a cross where Jesus declared for you and me that *lilt* is finished!”

Jude then begins our text saying, *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith.”* So, as we approach the return of our Lord, we are reminded first that we are His beloved. We are Christ’s own, His children, those who have been baptized into His body and given His holy name, having been washed clean by His blood by Grace through faith alone. With this in mind, he continues that as we anticipate our Lord’s return, the baptized child of God, or the Christian should be *“building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit.”* This holy faith to which he speaks is the faith he spoke of earlier in this same chapter, *“the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”* This is not an abstract faith, or one that is subject to our human feelings or emotions, but the actual teaching and words from Jesus to us and for us. This is the doctrine, or teaching of our Lord. This is the teaching Jesus speaks of in Matt. 28:20, where He gives the gift of baptism and tells his disciples *“teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* This holy faith then, is our confession of who Jesus is. *“You are the Christ, Son of the Living God”* as Peter confessed. It is Jesus Himself, the Lord that we confess, and Him crucified and risen for the sinner:.

That is how Jude says we should build ourselves up. In the Word or teaching of Jesus, the Gospel. This is why Christian worship is centered on the Word of Christ. It’s why we read the Bible out loud, sing the Bible and pray the Bible, the liturgy delivers this Word of Jesus to you, since it is through the active and living Word of God that we are built up in the holy faith and even given the gift of faith, *““Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””* Deut. 8:3 therefore, Jude tells us to build ourselves and one another up in this Word of Christ by which we

are given faith to trust in Christ's death for us, for "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ."

We are then encouraged in our text to pray "in the Holy Spirit", which is the same as saying pray this same Word for one another. What a beautiful gift we have in the Bible as a means for prayer. For we confess that we don't know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us, giving us His words and helps us pray. We can pray the "Our Father" or Lord's Prayer, we can pray the Psalms and our Lord is there to help us to even know what and how to pray. We need not be afraid to pray, but rather take comfort in the fact that our Lord has given us prayers and even He Himself we are told in the book of Hebrews is praying with us and for us.

As we await our Lord's return, we are also told to "keep ourselves in the love of God". To be sure this isn't referring to our love for God, because our love God is non-existent in and of ourselves. In fact, because of our sin nature we don't love God or as the catechism explains we don't "fear, love and trust God" by our own strength, but as St. John reminds us that "we love God because He first loved us." It is God's love "for us" that we should be kept in, and any love of God we have is from Him as gift. So, where then do we receive this love of God by which we are kept in the holy faith? WE receive this love right here, in the body of Christ, in the service of our Lord where He showers us with His love. Where he baptizes us, absolves us of our sin, declares His word of forgiveness to us and places it in our ears and thus our hearts. It is where He feeds us His true Body and true Blood for the forgiveness of sins, therefore we are kept in the in the love of God, by being where His Word is rightly taught and His Sacraments are rightly administered, in His church. This is how He loves and sustains us. We are not alone, for He has gathered a family, brothers and sisters from every tribe, tongue and nation to be sustained and strengthened in this love together. A church full of absolved sinners, strengthened together by the One who took our place on the cross and died for us.

This leads us to Jude's final encouragement, where we are told to continue *"waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. // And as we are waiting ... "* [22] *And have mercy on those who doubt; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. //* We desire the same mercy of God, the Gospel, that has redeemed us for

our neighbor, for our spiritual family, for one another. This is where what Luther called the mutual consolation of the brethren takes place, where we are reminded that because of the mercy of God we are saved, and not of our own doing one bit. It's 100 gift or grace. Therefore, we have mercy on our brothers and sisters, we extend the word of forgiveness that has been given to us, to them. Paul puts it this way in Galatians 6:1-2

"[1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. [2] Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. " Helping those who are weak in faith or having mercy on those burdened by sin and guilt is this consolation that is spoken of by both Jude and St. Paul. In other words, in the same way you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not of yourselves, but is a gift of God so that no one can boast, speak and love this way to your neighbor who is also saved by grace through faith. For we are not alone, but baptized into Christ's body where we have

opportunity to love, encourage and forgive one another, just as we have been

forgiven in Christ.

Jude ends our text with a blessing and promise, that at the same time he encourages us to build ourselves up in the faith, pray, and wait for the mercy of Christ, Christ Himself will be at work doing these very things for us. This is the beauty of the Gospel. What God gives us to do, He always accomplishes for us. From our faith, to His love and mercy, this is all His work, therefore Jude blesses us with, */I Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy*". For the baptized child of God, Christ's Second advent or Second coming is not to be feared, for He has already judged our sin on the cross. It is there that is judgement day for the believer, Good Friday. At the cross the punishment that you deserve was put upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He took upon Himself all of your sin and now remembers it no more, so that as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed your sins from you. So here, today and forever, instead of wrath, He gives His peace to you. Instead of being angry at you, He loves you, and calls you to Himself to feed you His true Body and Blood which forgives your sin, resulting in eternal life and salvation. He keeps you from stumbling and He presents you blameless before God with great joy. He loves doing this for you again and again and again, seventy times seven.

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, [25] to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever." In the Name of Jesus.