

# What Does this Christian Life Look Like

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost [Proper 28b]

November 18, 2018

## Hebrews 10:11-25

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. <sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, <sup>16</sup> "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," <sup>17</sup> then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." <sup>18</sup> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and **since we have a great priest over the house of God,** <sup>22</sup> **let us draw near with a true heart in full confidence of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.** <sup>23</sup> **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.** <sup>24</sup> **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,** <sup>25</sup> **not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

## In the Name of Jesus.

You belong to Christ. He ransomed you with his own blood; he made you his own. We teach this to our children and we say it to each other, especially at times of travail or doubt.

In the Catechism, we teach our families that

***Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased an won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own.***

We can see these words of the Catechism coming to us from, among other places in Scripture, the reading of this morning of Hebrews 10:

**Where there is forgiveness of [sins], there is no longer any offering for sin. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full confidence of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

So we teach this to our children and we speak it to one another in encouragement. Christ has offered the sacrifice. It is over. Complete. Our sin is atoned. He has ransomed us from sin, death, and the devil. We belong to him. He is our Lord.

And yet, while Christ has redeemed us, defeating our enemies of sin, death, and the devil, we still live in the travail, in the doubt and pain.

Christ has offered the sacrifice, says the letter to the Hebrew Christians. It is complete. He has sat down at the right hand of God his Father. [Hebrews 10:12]

Yet, as he is seated on the Throne in Heaven, and as he intercedes to his Father on our behalf, he is waiting for the time when his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.

So, the victory is accomplished. The ransom has been paid. Sinners are redeemed. Yet, this victory has not been fully enacted. For that, we wait, along with our Lord, for his return on the last day, when all those who belong to him will then be brought forth in their resurrected bodies like his.

But we do wait. Why? Why didn't Jesus just fully enact his kingdom on that day some 2,000 years ago when he rose from the dead? Sin, death, and the devil were, indeed, defeated at the cross and resurrection. So why didn't Jesus then bring it all to its complete, full enactment at that time? Had he, we wouldn't be here. You and I and our children wouldn't be included.

When the final enactment is done, when he comes on the last day to call all his own to himself for eternity, there will be no more sinful flesh, no more lives of travail, and no more bringing forth of new

lives. That is, as Jesus waits for the full consummation, he is bringing forth generation after generation, so that all those he calls to himself will have, indeed, been born. And that includes you and me and our children.

So we give thanks that Jesus waits until the last day to put the death blow to all sinful flesh, to death, and to the devil and the demons. For that means, we who are born after the cross, he has now brought us into life, so that we may hear his Gospel and be made his own.

But while we wait along with our Lord Jesus for the Last Day, we live in our sinful flesh, and the devil and his demons still flail. They still do their work of deceit, temptation, accusation, and bringing doubt.

So while we wait, until he comes again, our Lord gives us the prayer to pray to his Father. In the prayer, we are given to pray that the Father's will in Heaven would be brought to us here on Earth, that our sins would be forgiven, as also the sins of those who sin against us, and that he would deliver us from evil. What does it mean to be delivered from evil? As the Large Catechism puts it,

*Deliver us from whatever evil may happen to us under the devil's kingdom: poverty, shame, death, all the agonizing misery and heartache of which there is such an unnumbered multitude here in this sinful world, for the devil is not only a liar, but also a murderer, and he constantly seeks our life. He wreaks his vengeance whenever he can afflict our bodies with misfortune and harm. Therefore, it happens that the devil often breaks men's necks or drives them to insanity, drowns some, and moves many to commit suicide and other terrible disasters. So there is nothing for us to do upon Earth but to pray against this archenemy without stopping. For unless God preserved us, we should not be safe from this enemy for even an hour.*

Can we not see all of this in our own lives and in the world around us? Christians are afflicted by the devil. One Christian is tempted to lie and slander, another is afflicted with sickness, another tempted even with suicide. Yet, they each belong to Christ.

To have temptation and affliction is not a mark of not being a Christian. Doubt and travail, this does not mean someone is apart from Jesus.

Rather, these are expected. The affliction of the unclean spirits will hit each of us in different ways, perhaps, but as long as we're still in our sinful flesh, we will be afflicted. David was tempted with adultery, Peter was tempted with denying Christ, yet, they both belonged fully to the Lord. James was tempted by pride, but he was the Lord's. Job even spoke of committing suicide. But that Job belonged to the Lord, we are never given to doubt.

Our Christian lives do not always look so Christian. How could they? We still live in our sinful flesh, and we have no need to deny that. The answer to the life of our sinful flesh is not to deny it or improve it, but to daily drown it in the promise of Baptism, daily repenting of our sin and turning to the Lord in faith.

And as we see fellow Christians afflicted, as we see a brother tempted with, say, slander or pride, a sister in the faith tempted with, say, despair or anger, we don't question whether or not Jesus has made them his own, rather, we speak to them the encouragement of the Gospel. Hebrews 10:22:

**Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full certainty of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

As we wait, the Lord gives us as gifts to one another. Hebrews speaks of us "*not neglecting to meet together*"—that's the Lord's Service, where the Lord's people meet each week to receive his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. But as we meet together, as Jesus is coming to us in Body and Blood, he is giving us to one another in encouragement.

As the brother in the faith is struggling with slander or pride or however the demons are afflicting him, as the sister is being hit with despair or anger, or however the demons are afflicting her, as another Christian is being tempted with adultery, another with suicide, all are encouraged at the Lord's Table. For there, not only is Jesus giving us his Body and Blood to purge us and make us his own, but in this, he is also letting us see that he is gathering us together as sinners—sinners afflicted in many and various ways by the devil, but sinners purged by the blood of Jesus, given honor before the Throne in Heaven, and given to encourage one another, and all the more as we see the Day drawing near.

**In the Name of Jesus.**