

St. Matthew 11:25-30

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is, of course, July 4<sup>th</sup> week-end. This is typically the time we give thanks to the Lord for His blessings upon this country. This is also a time in which we remember our many freedoms. But I think most of us know that what this country was and had are being questioned and fading.

It was an afternoon in March, just before the pandemic went full blast. While sitting in the barber shop waiting my turn for a hair cut (at least, what's left of it) I noted that a patron had left on the seat of the chair next to me a copy of "Men's Journal", March 2020 edition. I noted in one article the statement, "(We live) in the Post Truth Era - facts are meaningless and misinformation threatens to topple Western Civilization as we know it." I did not get the title of the article because I was called to the barber's chair.

The fact is, *the post truth era* got its fallen human start right after God asked Adam, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" And Adam answered, "The Woman whom you gave to be with me she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate." (Gen. 3:11-12) It was God's fault for putting the woman there; for putting Eve in his life. It was Eve's fault for giving Adam the fruit; for luring him to eat. Adam refused any and all responsibility. As the Psalmist said, "I said in my alarm, "All mankind are liars."" (Ps. 116:11) and with that we have seen - and many are experiencing - a growing apprehension and fear of the intensification of what's been with humanity since Genesis 3: hell driven lying and deception.

As God's people we would have to be the most pitied if we're not taking to heart our Lord Jesus' words - words we have considered here innumerable times: "And because lawlessness will be increased (not might be but will be), the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." (Matt. 24:12-13) Nothing there - there's nothing anywhere! - that says this world will resolve its turmoil. The turmoil will be increased!

Let's do this: let's consider . . .

## THE BLESSING OF HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

### I. Heavenly Citizenship.

We need to first establish what is our true homeland. It's made very clear from these words of Scripture: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:20) This, of course, does not mean that we walk away from our God given responsibilities, respect to others, service and aid to others. It's what we sang in our sermon hymn; the obvious: "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." The Holy Spirit impresses upon us:

"...remember that you were at (one) time separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens (citizens!) with the saints and members of the household of God..." (Eph. 2:12-13,19)

And it is comforting to connect to that this Word of God: "(In Christ) God...has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to inheritance...kept in heaven (for us)." (Pet. 1:3-4) In Christ Jesus, we are truly blessed with Heavenly citizenship.

### II. Eternal Wisdom.

Our text says:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." (vv. 25-26)

The question is: "Who are the little children?" Well, we know that children are the outstanding examples of faith. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3) Little children, you see, simply believe. They're not worldly wise but grow wise to the ways of the world, but do not seek them! It has been stated, "Those who cling to such human wisdom (worldly wisdom that sees itself in charge and control of all things) and judge all things on the basis of such wisdom exclude themselves from the kingdom of God." (Albrechts, "Matthew", People's Bible Commentary, CPH, p. 170) Well, look where human wisdom has brought this world.

The Apostle Paul writes, "For the Word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing (that is, the cross is foolish and ridiculous), but to those who are being saved it is the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18) This is what God has given to those He has brought to faith: understanding of the meanings of the cross, life, and salvation - eternal wisdom!

Do we believe; understand that we are sinful and undeserving of God's love? Well, here are the words of eternal wisdom He gives us in Jesus: "For as high as the heavens are above the earth (Infinitely high!), so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west (Infinitely far!), so does he remove our transgressions from us." (Ps. 103:11,12) Friends, those words are stamped on our Heavenly citizenship papers. Listen to what we have heard here many times, understanding that we each fall into one or more of the categories listed:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him (of God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (I Cor. 1:27-31)

Think about this: "Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." Instead of being overwhelmed by **whatever overwhelms us** of this world (And there's plenty of that!), we cry out with praise and thanksgiving that we were chosen. In our text Jesus says, "...no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (v. 27) The Son chose you and me to know the Father; to be citizens of heaven. Eternal wisdom! And one other blessing. Jesus says . . .

### III. Eternal Rest.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (vv. 28-30)

This is who we are: those "who labor and are heavy laden" because we know and confess our constant struggle with sin. It has been stated, "(our sin) is a burden too heavy to bear...this load will drag (us) down to hell if (we) must bear it by ourselves." (Albrechts, p. 171) But we don't. Christ took the burden from us - carried the weight of our sin, and **moved us from death and hell to eternal life!**

Concerning the statement, "you will find rest for your souls", Luther noted that God's people "are without rest for a time. But such turbulent time is short; the rest (for) the soul, however, which believers will find, will be important and eternal." It's true, of course; what rest we find with this world is uncertain and momentary. We've been getting a sharply focused picture of that, haven't we? How many times have we said something along the line of, "Well, what's next?" We travel from one explosion to another - to the end!

The Packer/Johnston translation of Luther's "Bondage of the Will" puts it this way:

God does not tell men more of His purpose than man needs to know; and, just because man's knowledge of what God is doing is always incomplete, (God's) actions will often appear to man to have precisely opposite characteristics to those which (God) ascribes to them. [In other words, we know God works all things to the good, but sometimes it doesn't appear or feel that way]. But in such cases it is man's part deliberately to accept God's interpretation in preference to his own. Faith will not lean to its own understanding of the appearance; faith will take God's word as a safe index to the reality, and will wait patiently till contrary appearances dissolve away with the coming of greater light. (p. 54)

And, dear friends, the light shines now in the love of God that comes to us through Jesus Christ; all that God gives and promises through the Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament. It will shine its fullest on that day when we citizens stand face to face in His Presence! All glory be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit Who made us citizens of Heaven! Forever!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

July 5, 2020

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## “The Blessing of Heavenly Citizenship”

- I. Heavenly Citizenship
- II. Eternal Wisdom.
- III. Eternal Rest.

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