

Lenten Midweek #5 – 2021  
Blessings in the Blood of Christ  
The Blood of Christ Sanctifies  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Hebrews 13:7-17

How did Peter feel? His words alone are enough to give us a clue. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Peter was uncomfortable, that’s for sure. His sin made Peter uncomfortable, at least that’s what he said. Who knows what Peter’s sinful tendencies were? One thing *is* for sure, whatever they were, he had them. Another thing’s for sure, *he* knew what they were and he wasn’t happy about it. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” That is straight dope. Straight from the heart; Peter couldn’t possibly have expressed himself any better.

After Peter had fished a whole night and caught nothing, Jesus asked Peter to do something that defied all human logic. “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4). Simon is tired, he is likely grumpy, all he wants to do is go home and sleep and Jesus is seemingly telling Peter how to ply his trade. But the fellow who is making this request is the same guy who healed Peter’s mother-in-law recently... and what Jesus was saying while standing in Peter’s boat just now (teaching the crowd on the shore) were words of clarity, words of hope, words that had divine authority. So, the tired fisherman labors back out into the deep and lets down his nets. The catch was miraculous – no one with a brain could deny it. Strained muscles, a momentary sense of disbelief seasoned with pure joy... and then the realization: I am out of my element, I am in a place that I should not be, I am so sinful, so filthy in mind and heart and He is so... holy.

What did Peter feel? He felt the strong dagger of repentance pierce his heart. Peter wanted this pain resolved and, in shame, he thought the best way was to have Jesus abandon him. Oh no, that would not be the way. Have you ever felt uncomfortable in God’s house? Kneeling at this altar, during the rite of confession and absolution, while the whole church is silent and I am kneeling at this holy altar, looking at that crucifix and rehearsing my week and having to confess *that* sin again, knowing in Whose presence I am placed, sometimes I feel like I should just walk out the door and let the good deacon conduct the service. “Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” Have you ever felt that? Have you been uncomfortable as you are reminded of your sins in this holy house? Have you been distressed to be in the Divine Service because you feel like you, a sinner, don’t belong?

Does sinful man belong in God’s presence? The answer to that question is a resounding “NO.” The prophet Isaiah had it right. Upon seeing the Lord, high and exalted, sitting on His Divine Throne with angels proclaiming His holiness and the foundations shaking from their voices, Isaiah knew what he was worth, truly knew whether or not he belonged in God’s presence. “Woe is me! For I am lost; I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of host!” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah and Peter were spiritual kin. St. Paul too; he wrote this: “I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.” “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.” “What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7). What we go

through, all Christians go through. From time immemorial, from the fall in the garden to the day when our Lord returns, this will be our experience. And it is good that it is so.

Blood; the answer is in the blood. Blood; the solution, the resolution of your conflict, your penitential heartache, your discomfort with God's holiness, your shame and your soul's genuine stain – the answer is in the blood. Christ's blood, God's blood, the blood shed for you in abundance as Jesus was tied to a flogging post and whipped, as a crown of thorns was pressed on His head, as nails penetrated His hands and feet, as a lance was thrust into His side – Blood! True God and true Man bleeds for the sins of the world, for the profanity that is our fallen nature and our fallen deeds, for the guilt that haunts our hearts even in this house – the Lord Christ unleashes His blood to cleanse you, to sanctify you, to make you holy. The life is in the blood. God's life for yours. The pristine and immaculately holy Son of God endures the torment of His passion and crucifixion to make you holy; that you may abide in His presence and not be ashamed.

Outside the camp; that's where the bodies of the OT sacrifices, the animals offered for sin, that's where they were burned up. They were offered and their blood was shed only for the house of Israel, only for Jews, and it was conducted in the Temple precincts but then they were burned "outside the camp." Comes now Christ to fulfill this OT formula. His blood is poured out and He meets the specter of death "outside the camp," outside of Jerusalem, at Golgotha, the place of the skull. For *all people* He dies. For the whole world (Jew and Gentile) to draw near to Him and receive His holiness, He is crucified. Our Divine Service is "outside the camp." We are out in the wide world where we bear His mark, we bear the reproach of those who despise the truth, who despise God and His holiness. We have no lasting city here. We seek the city that is to come. We need not and we cannot go back to the Jerusalem of old. To go back to the OT as though Jesus has not come, has not suffered, has not died, has not risen again – to go back there would be to forsake the truth, to forsake the Gospel. We cling to Christ here, in this Spirit-filled space where God's Word consoles sinners and God breathes into us the breath of life.

My brother wanted me to do a survey among my friends, my acquaintances. I told him: "I don't have any friends and very few acquaintances." But I have you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, my fellow sojourners, the treasured saints of Christ the King. He said the survey was simple – one question in length. Ask people you know whether or not they are a good person. Robert William, my boon sibling, has a biblical view of humanity – a not very flattering view of every Tom, Dick, and Henrietta. Peter, Paul, and Isaiah share my brother's point of view. But, or so the hypothesis goes, most people want to consider themselves to be "good people," probably in light of how horrible everyone else is, I suppose. Okay, so now is as good a time as any: How many of y'all are good people... raise your hand. I take back what I said earlier; I have one friend and I asked her if she was a good person and Alise said: "only in Christ."

Brilliant. To Peter, after Peter told Him to go away, Jesus said this: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10). About Paul, the persecutor of the church, Jesus said: "He will be my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). And Isaiah, a coal is taken from the altar by angels who touched Isaiah's lips with it that he might be sanctified: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7). As I confess my sins, kneeling in conflict, I

implicitly know that the suffering of Christ has resolved the intolerable situation of seeing my sins up close at this altar. I implicitly know that I will drink from His chalice and His shed blood desires to have me as a human receptacle. He shed it for me. He didn't go away from Peter and He will never go away from you. His divine alternative is far better. He sanctifies us; He gives us His holiness. That is the whole point of His incarnation, His perfect life, His mighty sacrifice, and His triumph on Easter.