

“Faith is Active”

St. Matthew 10:8

August 9, 2020

SERMON 1928

by Michael David Henson

Our sermon text is from Matthew 10:8b, “Freely you have received, freely give.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus concludes the parable of the unjust steward with the words, “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Luke 16:11). Thus, we see that it is expected of the believer in Jesus Christ that he faithfully uses the gifts which God has given to Him. Dr. Martin Luther teaches us through the Small Catechism that “the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” **We have been given gifts from almighty God!**

First of all, the Triune God has provided for our salvation through the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. This heavenly sent Savior took on our human flesh and sinful predicament that He might be the solution to our sinful bondage. Jesus Christ showed Himself to be merciful, blameless and pure. He humbly suffered and died that we might secure our redemption from sin. He ran against a troop of haughty sinners and their leader the devil. He defeated them, not by deception, but through His shrewd trust in the Word of God. By this unwavering trust, we saw that His way was perfect. His life was without sin, never a envious or hateful word. His atonement was complete and perfect. The Word of the Lord which promised the male offspring would crush the head of the Serpent is fulfilled and proven true and faith.

Second, our God has made sure that this treasure chest of benefits does not lie unused or unapplied. **Our Savior appointed apostles and then pastors to give out these gifts which He had secured.** After His resurrection Jesus said, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:21-23). Men are sent into the pastoral office for a noble work of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments of Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Lord’s Supper. These called men are stewards of the mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) of God. Pastors hold Divine Services and lead God’s people into the study of God’s holy Word. They apply the Word of God to our lives, especially at the time of new birth, marriage, illness and death.

Third, the water and Word of Holy Baptism has supplied you with **the gift of faith.** Faith is a trust in Christ for eternal salvation. Faith is a confidence in which we are convinced that our debt of sin had been paid and that we have become an heir of eternal salvation through faith in Christ. The guilty conscience because of past sin has been removed. The worry of having done enough of the law to earn salvation is obliterated. The slavery to sinful desires has been broken. You are free in Christ.

This line of thought leads us to the thrust of today's Holy Gospel. Luke 16:10-11, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

The Christian is required to be faithful regarding the gifts he has been given. Here Jesus contrasts faithfulness in "unrighteous mammon" with faithfulness in "true riches." **Unrighteous mammon** is not a reference to sinful things, but just the temporal and worldly stuff of this world—food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods.... This it includes things like money and a car. But it also includes a spouse and children. It includes the time which you have been given to walk this earth. It includes the health and abilities with which you have been blessed.

Jesus contrasts these mundane worldly gifts with the spiritual and eternal gifts delivered to us through His Church on earth. In the first part of this sermon, I gave a list of three categories of "true riches:" 1. Christ's work of redemption, 2. the pastoral office, and 3. the instrumental means of the Word and Sacraments. In order to spur believers on to greater faithfulness, He contrasts the worldly gifts and the spiritual gifts. Even unbelievers understand the needs for not wasting your food, money or time. As believers we have been given an even greater trust. We have been enlightened with the gifts of eternal salvation.

It is time to examine our stewardship of both the secular and the religious, the first article gifts and the third article gifts, the unrighteous mammon and the true riches.

We have fallen short in our faithfulness.

Reading the Word of God

Concentrating upon the readings and the Sermon.

Leading our family in daily devotions and prayers.

Supporting the work of the church

Providing for our children and parents.

Serving our employer so that the business prospers

Helping our neighbor, who is going through tough times.

Giving away our money to help the poor.

The Old Testament reading speaks of all the things God does for His believers. Those gifts are not to squandered. 2 Samuel 22:29-34

29 "For You are my lamp, O Lord; The Lord shall enlighten my darkness.

God didn't give you a lamp so that you could hide it under a bushel basket.

30 For by You I can run against a troop; By my God I can leap over a wall.

If God made you able to run against a troop and leap over a wall, shouldn't you go to war and use those abilities. You are not to lazily stay home.

31 As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

God didn't give you a shield so that you could stay home and watch TV. He desires that you serve your neighbor and be faithful with His gifts. There are those who need to have God as a shield. Take that Word to them. You have already put the Word of God to the test. It has been proven powerful and effective. Speak it to those who need it.

V. 34 He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places.
You are not to sit cross-legged on the top of the mountain like a spiritual guru.
Our God has given you great wisdom and knowledge. Use your knowledge to reach down and help others up. They need the forgiveness of sins and a firm foundation

v. 32 “For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?
33 God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect.

You have been forgiven, faithfully show forth God that He may become the strength and power of your friend and relative and neighbor.

Once we have come to faith in Christ, the Scriptures do not tell us to sit down and lazily rest. They don't tell us to go back to your sinful life and sinful desires. The Epistle reading says, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Listen to the list of warnings God has given to His believers.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13

6Now these things became our examples, to the intent that **we should not lust** after evil things as they also lusted.

7And **do not become idolaters** as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

8**Nor let us commit sexual immorality**, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

9**nor let us tempt Christ**, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

10**nor complain**, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.** 13No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

We are not to become complacent in our faith. We are not to act as if we can live our life any way which we want and we shall never lose our salvation, saying, “I will never fall” We are to faithfully use the gifts.

First, faithfully use the gifts of true riches. Here the Word and receive the Sacraments. Use confession and the forgiveness to return to the true faith.

Second, faithfully use the gifts of unrighteous mammon.