

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS

The Twenty-First Sunday After Trinity

October 15, 2006

Prayer Upon Entering Church: Enlighten our minds, we pray You, O God, by the Spirit who proceeds from You, that, as Your Son has promised, we may be led into all truth; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

In Nomine Jesu

Job 23:1-9

Then Job answered and said:

- ²"Today also my complaint is bitter;
my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.
- ³Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his seat!
- ⁴I would lay my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.
- ⁵I would know what he would answer me
and understand what he would say to me.
- ⁶Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; he would pay attention to me.
- ⁷There an upright man could argue with him,
and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.
- ⁸"Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,
and backward, but I do not perceive him;
- ⁹on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him;
he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.

Job 23:16-17

- God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;
- ¹⁷yet I am not silenced because of the darkness,
nor because thick darkness covers my face.

The Sermon

An airplane crashed into a building in New York again this week. Where was God? Another student disappeared – this time at the University of Vermont. Where was God? Where was God out there on the Florida Turnpike as that mother tried to shield her three children from the crazed killer who took their lives and the life of her husband? Job sits scratching his sores oozing puss with a piece of broken pottery – mourning the loss of fortune and family – and he too asks: “Where is God?”

Disappointment – failure – and tears – make life trying – hard and bitter. So it was for Job. So it is for us at some point in our life. Does God really care that we’re in trouble? “Where is your God, Christian?” – says the man of the world – as misfortune and sorrows heap themselves upon the believer.

Sickness – failure – and heartache tumble in on all sides – making life difficult and discouraging. Even the sinful heart of the believer anxiously asks: “Where is my God? Has He forgotten me?” As we stand at the death bed of a child we love – or at the open grave of an only son who has been the joy and delight of our home – the thought surges through the mind: “Does God really love me?” This is what happened to Job.

When our entire fortune is just snatched away, we too sob: “Has God turned from me?” You see all the misery outside the doors of this beautiful church? Do you see all the loneliness out there – all the distress – all the disappointment and discouragement and all the destruction in that world out there? It seems the Christian gets a double portion of it all. Does God care? Is He really my God?

“Where is your God?” **There** He is! There He hangs on Calvary – dying – because He cares. There Jesus sheds His Blood because He loves you and me and He doesn’t want us to perish. There on His altar He feeds us with His Body and gives us to drink of His holy precious Blood – the same Body and Blood broken and shed on His Holy Cross – because He cares –and He loves.

“And the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin.” (I John 1:7). If God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all even into death – to

make us heirs of life eternal – then I submit to you this day that He **does care** – as we go through this life. And He will not leave us hopeless. And He will not leave us helpless. And underneath us are the everlasting arms of this Savior God – the same arms that hung wide on the Holy Cross – and those arms will not let us fall into a bottomless pit.

As I see my Savior God dying on that Cross to open to me the gates of heaven, I can never say that God has turned from me. In spite of everything that befalls – He loves me. Where is your God? There – on Calvary –dying that I might live forever!

There – on the altar – in the consecrated bread and wine – that He might be **in** me – with all His power and all His love – that I too may have a share in the resurrection – whenever –and however – I die. And His is our Help. And He is our Strength. And He is our sure Defense – even as He was for Job. He’s there in the physician – giving that doctor wisdom and understanding – as He did blessed St. Luke the Physician whom we commemorate on Wednesday October 18th.

He’s there in the medicine the doctor prescribes – to bring healing to broken bodies and broken spirits. He’s there in the preacher – to bring His blessed assurance. And I place myself and all that is mine into His scarred hands to watch over me for all eternity.

Job learned this lesson too as we all must. By the end of the book he had learned: *“Turn your burdens over to the Lord, and He will take care of you.”* And only in this Christ – and only through this Christ – can we find real rest and lasting peace. As St. Augustine said 1600 years ago: *“Our souls are restless until they find their rest – O God – in Thee.”*

That is why this Savior God whom we now know by name as Jesus says to us: *“Come to Me all who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28). Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds + in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!