

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!



Illustration: Jesus and the Tribute Money

A Devotional for the Week of the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. – Matthew 19:24.

When the rich young man had decided in favor of his riches and against the Savior, Jesus sorrow-fully said to His disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" His disciples were astonished at His words. But the Lord now said: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly amazed and said among themselves: "Who then can be saved?" The Lord said: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

– It is said that one can buy anything for money. Yes, anything that can be bought. Hence the powerful charm that riches have. Whoever sets his heart upon them is charmed by them, is bound as with a thousand chains, so that he cannot believe, cannot come to his Savior and follow Him. Riches take such a firm hold of his heart that he cannot give it to his Savior. For it is "either/or" – he must give his heart either to his Savior or to riches; he cannot give it to both at the same time. And as we have said, riches take a firm hold of his heart. Only God, yes, He alone, can set that heart free and give it to the Savior.

My dear Christian, examine thyself well as to how you regard riches. If you have riches, do you set your heart upon them? If you have them not, does your heart desire them? Consider what you have just read! You must give your heart to your Savior, and to Him alone, or you will be lost!

PRAYER. – Lord, eternal, almighty God, who protects all who put their trust in You, increase Your mercy on me, that, having You as my Leader and my Guide, I may regard the temporal goods, which so easily ensnare the soul, in such a manner as not to lose the eternal ones: for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, my Savior. Amen.

Hymn 385, 4.

The world seeks after wealth,
And unto Mammon offers
Its all, content if gold
Is hoarded in its coffers;
I know a higher good,
Which e'er my joy shall be;
My Jesus is my Wealth –
What is the world to me!

MONDAY.

Whether of the two did the will of his father? – Matthew 21:31.

Hear a parable of Jesus. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said: Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said: I will not. But afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said: I go, sir. And he went not." (Matthew 21:29-30.) Now the Lord asks: "Whether of the two did the will of his father?" Evidently, the first.

–What are we to learn from this? Listen! In Christian churches there are many who are yes-sayers and no-doers. They hear the Word of God. God's Word says to them: "Repent, and believe the Gospel!" They say, Yes, we will. Of course they say yes. Are they not church-members? How can they be expected to say no? But never a thought of true repentance, never an impulse of true faith arises within their hearts. They are and remain indifferent, dead Christians, Christians only with their mouths, only as to outward appearance. Then there are also those who are no-sayers and yes-doers. At first they are manifest unbelievers and slaves of sin. The Word of God comes to them. God's Word says to them: "Repent, and believe the Gospel!" They say, No! They are obstinate. They cast aside the Word of God. They want to remain in their unbelief

and serve sin. Later they recall to their minds this Word of God. The Spirit of God operates upon their hearts. And they are sorry for having said no at a previous time. And they repent and believe the Gospel. And they become dear children of God.

Which, now, of these have done the will of God? The yes-sayers and no-doers, or the no-sayers and yes-doers? Surely the latter. And who will enter the kingdom of God? Ah, you know. And now what of yourself?

PRAYER. – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, who at all times, by means of Your Word and through the Holy Spirit, calls me to true repentance and bid me to believe the Gospel, grant me grace to truly say yes and also to do accordingly. Guard me against hypocrisy which merely professes Christianity with the mouth. O let me not be numbered with those unhappy ones to whom You said: "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Let me be Your dear child for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Hymn 417, 1. 2.

O JESUS, Lamb of God, who art
The Life and Comfort of my heart,
I, wretched sinner, come to Thee
And bring so many sins with me.

O God, my sinfulness is great,
I groan beneath a dreadful weight;
Yet, be Thou merciful, I pray,
Take guilt and punishment away.

TUESDAY.

Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. – Matthew 23:8.

Rabbi means Master. The word Rabbi denotes a person who in the Christian Church claims for himself a spiritual authority above others, and hence also honor and respect in preference to others, as the Pope does and his priesthood. But Christ does not want such Rabbis in His Church and in His kingdom. To those who hold an office in the Church He says: "Be not ye called Rabbi." And He furthermore says to them, as well as to the Christian laity: "For *one* is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." And to all His Christians He says: "And call no man your father upon the earth; for *one* is your Father, who is in heaven." (v. 9.) In view of this I ask: What of the "Holy Father" of the Roman Church together with his many "Fathers," the priests?

In the worldly governments there are masters indeed, and there is authority, and due respect must be paid those in authority, and each according to his station, or the power he is vested with. There is also parental authority. But in the kingdom of Christ there is nothing of the kind. There all without distinction are brethren of one another. There Christ alone is the Master. He rules in this kingdom by means of His Word, and solely by means of this Word.

If a pastor proclaims the Word of Christ to his congregation, the congregation should obey; but in that case it is not obedient to the pastor, but to Christ. If the humblest and poorest and least respected member of the congregation speaks a word that Christ has said, the whole congregation should obey at once; for it is Christ, their Master, who speaks through this person. And if the pastor, or any church official, or the most highly respected man of the congregation says anything that is not Christ's Word, it is of no value. *One* is our Master, even Christ; and all we are brethren.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, only master of Your Church, I pray You to protect us, Your Christians, lest men rule us, Your Christians, and subject us to slavery. O Lord, You alone rule within Your Church by means of Your plainly written Word. And give Your Holy Spirit to us, who are Yours, that we may at all times willingly bow beneath Your Word. Then all will be well with us. Amen.

Hymn 461, 1. 4.

LORD, in Thy kingdom there shall be
No aliens from each other,
But even as he loves himself
Each saint shall love his brother.

One Baptism and one faith have we,
One Spirit sent to win us,
One Lord, one Father, and one God,
Above, and through, and in us.

WEDNESDAY.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. – Romans 8:14.

Dear Christian! May God prevent that you be beguiled to live according to the desires of your flesh, according to your old Adam, according to the evil lust that dwell within you; for if you live so, you are lost. But if with the aid of the Holy Spirit that dwells within you that you mortify, daily mortify, your old Adam, who would force the members of your body into his service, you shall be saved. Why? Does this – your work – save you? By no means. You are saved solely by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. By mortifying your old Adam with the aid of the Holy Spirit, you prove yourself to be a believing child of God.

The children whom God has received through grace have this disposition, this God-given disposition, that, led and moved by the Holy Spirit, they mortify the old Adam and gladly and willingly serve their heavenly Father. Whoever does not do this is not a believing child of God. He, however, who does this is a child of God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. And this leading of the Holy Spirit is no slavish constraint and compulsion, so that you must live in continuous dread and be full of

trembling, like those who are under the Law and know nothing of grace.

No, this leading of the Holy Spirit is a sweet and childlike impulse within you which causes you to say: Abba, Father, gladly will I renounce sin and serve You; but do help me! And when the Holy Ghost so leads you, He always bears witness to you through the Word of Grace that you are a child of God, His dearly beloved child, whom He has received into His gracious arms, and that you have forgiveness of sins and are an heir of eternal salvation through your dear Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this a most precious truth? Being a child of God, are you not glad to have the Holy Spirit lead you thus?

PRAYER. – Almighty, eternal God, who out of pure and unmerited grace has made me Your child through faith in Your dear Son and an heir of eternal life, I pray You, let the Spirit of Your Son take possession of my heart, and effectually cry within me: Abba, Father! and by His tender impulse move me to renounce sin and serve You with all my heart, until at last, in the perfection of blissful eternity, I shall enter upon my blessed inheritance. Amen.

Hymn 258, 1. 2. 5.

COME, Holy Spirit, come!
Let Thy bright beams arise;
Dispel the sorrow from our minds,
The darkness from our eyes.

Revive our drooping faith,
Our doubts and fears remove,
And kindle in our breasts the flame
Of never-dying love.

Dwell, therefore, in our hearts;
Our minds from bondage free;
Then shall we know, and praise, and love,
The Father, Son and Thee.

THURSDAY.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. – Romans 8:28.

"I will do this or that" – thus you determine to speak and to purpose in your mind. Well said. In matters pertaining to this life you, to a certain extent, have a free will. And yet, God, who rules all things, also governs your doing according to His counsel aforethought. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 20:23.)

"What a strange accident!" some one may say when something occurs in a strikingly unexpected way, something fortunate or unfortunate. But, my dear Christian, nothing is accidental. What might seem more accidental than the falling of a hair from off your head? "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered," numbered by God. (Matthew 10:30.) The almighty and wonderful God guides all things by His counsel, the greatest as well as the smallest, with absolute surety of purpose, as with a million reins. "What a misfortune!" you say weepingly when something grievous befalls you. But there is no misfortune for the children of God.

Children of God receive all things – all things, do you hear? – from the gracious hand of God. Hence nothing can be a misfortune. Everything must be a blessing. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good," said Joseph. (Genesis 50:20.) "No trouble troubles me, and night is bright as day." Thus we sing, and rightly so. In short, all things must work together for good to them that love God, to the children of God, within whom the love to God is kindled through faith. All, yea, all things must work together for good to them; what they do of their own proposing, what they might call accidental, what seems to them a misfortune, indeed, even the sins they have committed, must work together for good to penitent children of God.

Oh, be a child of God, love God, walk in His ways, trust His power and grace, and know that all things must work together for

good to you. For good? Yes, especially toward the end that you abide in the faith and be saved.

PRAYER. – Ah, then, my God and Father, let me be Your dear child and firmly and steadfastly believe what You say, that all things must work together for my good in time and eternity. Give to me Your Holy Spirit, my Father, that I may greatly rejoice in such certainty, never caring, never doubting, never troubling my mind, but, being Your child, always hoping for Your wondrous grace through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn 507, 1.

WHATEVER God ordains is good!
Holy His will abideth;
I will be still whate'er He doth,
And follow where He guideth,
He is my God; Though dark my road,
He knoweth how to shield me,
Wherefore to Him I yield me.

FRIDAY.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. – Proverbs 3:5-6.

You would always like to do the right thing whenever you undertake anything. Is it not so? -whatever will insure thee true success and God's blessing. How must you go about this? Use proper forethought and calm deliberation in everything. An old adage warns against "doing things with haste and repenting at leisure." Hence, make good use of the understanding God has given you.

But do not "lean unto thine own understanding": do not trust in it. For the sphere of your understanding, though it be ever so keen, is limited. You can not comprehend all things. A thousand contingencies may arise to upset your shrewdest calculations. Trust in

the Lord with all your heart and in a truly childlike manner implore Him to guide you and direct your paths.

And be His dear child through faith in your Savior, in order that you may be able fully to trust in Him and to call upon Him and to pray to Him in a manner becoming a child. Yes, and in all your ways, in all your undertakings, acknowledge Him who is your dear Father to be your God, and always let it be your foremost concern to do what is well pleasing to Him, avoiding everything that displeases Him. Then He will direct your paths. Then you will be sure of always doing the right thing, the thing that will bring you true success and God's blessing.

Think not, my dear Christian, that your heavenly Father will direct your paths better than you are able to do? Therefore, trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

PRAYER. – O my dear Heavenly Father, be with me in all my ways, and direct my paths for my welfare in time and eternity. You will do it, for You have promised it. But it is also Your will that I should trust in You and acknowledge You in all my ways. Grant me Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of childlike trust, that I may gladly do this, and walk those paths that are well pleasing to You. And then bless me, my dear Father, and let me prosper in whatever I may undertake, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Hymn 384, 1. 2.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out my path for me.
I dare not choose my lot;
I would not, if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine; so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray,
Take Thou my cup and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem;
Choose Thou my good and ill.

SATURDAY.

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Are you a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ? Truly? Then every grief that befalls you, every pain of body or soul, every sorrow, great and small, every tribulation, everything that may annoy you, every anguish, every need, want, or hardship - it is all a kind, fatherly chastening and correction God gives you for your soul's welfare in time and eternity. This thou must firmly believe. It cannot be otherwise. For what else could it be? Chance? There is no such thing as chance; everything is under God's direction.

Or did others cause your trouble, or did you bring it upon yourself? That may be the immediate cause. But this, too, is under God's direction. Or is your trouble to be looked upon as a just punishment of an angry God? Impossible! Christ has suffered that for you. And God loves you, His child, though you sin much. No, it is all, without exception, a kind, fatherly chastening and correction which God wants you to experience for your good, for your spiritual betterment. Therefore, my child, despise not the chastening of the Lord, do not murmur against it, do not reject it; neither be weary of His correction. For - mark well! - whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a father the son in whom he delights.

Ah, indeed, you may weep and pray and cry: Spare me, O Lord! But at the same time trust in Him, and kiss the loving hand that

smites you. Nor inquire after the why and wherefore in each case. Say not: What have I done now? Are you not at all times a sinner in need of correction? Fix your eyes intently upon God's never-erring wisdom and His never-wavering love.

PRAYER. - My dear Heavenly Father, I thank You that I may rest assured that every grief that befalls me is under Your direction and is a kind, fatherly chastening for my good, my soul's welfare. Grant me Your Holy Spirit, that I may humble myself under Your mighty hand, firmly believing that You will comfort me again and gladden my soul, O loving Father! Amen.

Hymn 246, 4.

Let us trust Thy witness wholly
That we children are of God,
Who rely upon Him solely,
When they pass beneath the rod;
For the Father's chastenings
Bless above all earthly things.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
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