

"God's Thoughts, Words and Deeds are Good for You"
Genesis 3:9-15

25 June Anno DOMINI 2006 -- Trinity 2 B

Pastor Michael L. McCoy
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Grace, mercy and peace ever be yours – in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Dear Baptized:

One of our confessions of sin is quite specific. We declare to Jehovah: “that we have sinned against Thee by thought, word and deed.” We certainly know that we are not even able to hide our thoughts from God and we know that too often our thoughts are not in accord with God’s will. Such thoughts are sins. We also know that the Lord is able to hear every word of ours ever uttered – from the defiant shouts to the barely audible grumblings and mutterings of the mouth and grinding of the teeth, and we know that “from the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so” (James 3:10). Such sinful mouthings are transgressions against God’s holy will. And what of our deeds? Well, apart from Jesus, they are nothing less than sinful, outward manifestations of what we speak, and said words are spawnings out of a heart which is sinful and unclean; that is, “only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Such a condition and such sins render us worthy only of every lasting condemnation. Dear Christian, these be the thoughts, words and deeds of the old Adam residing in each human being.

So, what does God think of all this? What’s He going to say about it? What’s He going to do? God’s thinking, saying, doing – on these three hinge our eternity. Is it possible to know, not only the words of God and His deeds, but even the thoughts of Almighty Lord of Sabbaoth? Certainly not if it were up to us. God would have to reveal the intentions of His heart and will to us – especially that from eternity He had our redemption in mind and that, in time, He has redeemed us, not only from death and the devil, but also from our sins of thought, word and deed. God has revealed this to us in His Word. Therefore, using the the Old Testament Reading for today and several supporting texts, may the Holy Spirit grant you to know that . . .

. . . “God’s Thoughts, Words and Deeds are Good for You”

“But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.’ The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’”

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

It's obvious from God's Word that God thinks about us and thinks a lot of us, intending only that which is good for us. His thoughts for you have been before you were created or before anything was created; that is, from eternity. He knew you before your clay inhaled its first breath. Ponder that bit of time when that one part of God's Word known as the Law, did not always accuse old Adam and was spoken for his good and for your good. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

And for the grown man named Adam, even though he was only a few days old, this was fine and he delighted in this God Who had thought on him, Who created him, Who had given him life and Who was with him always. Adam heard the Word of the Lord and knew that it was good for him. Thus, the man could be perfectly happy and go about his vocations in the two oldest occupations – being a gardener and being a steward of the Word. Thereupon, he tilled the garden and awaited his congregation and the proclamation of God's Word to her.

God's thoughts were for the man's good and it was not good for him to be alone. So the Lord God, according to His good Word that has been revealed to us, took action and made a woman from Adam's side – not by piercing the man's heart with a spear so that blood and water poured forth – but by causing a deep sleep to come upon the man, and then taking a rib and fashioning it into a woman. God's deed was good for Adam and thus the man had a helper fit for him and a congregation to whom he was called to tell the Word. It is no wonder that Adam would call "his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20), for God has a "unique community in the world. It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God" (LC, 3rd Art., para. 42).

It is no wonder that those sons and daughters of Eve who have been brought into the Church through the preaching of the Gospel; that is, through the proclamation and application of the forgiveness of sins, find Psalm 139 a favorite when pondering God's thoughts, words and deeds for them and for their good. Listen, dear baptized, to a portion of that psalm bespeaking such wonder:

For Thou didst form my inward parts,
Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise Thee, for Thou art fearful and wonderful.
Wonderful are Thy works! Thou knowest me right well;
my frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was being made in secret,
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.
Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in Thy book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are Thy thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Psalm 139:13-17

And with such thoughts of God abiding in the soul, and with such Divine truths confessed by word of mouth – one to the other, the man goes about his deeds and the woman carries on her life's activities – they both, as one, went about their vocations. In the midst of such a symphonic communion with God and each other, the anti-word was heard in the Garden of Eden: "Did God say?" (Genesis 3:1). Shortly thereafter the Fall into sin took place, "so that by one man sin entered the world and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). Then there is silence as the Scriptures reveal no words spoken, either by the victorious Satan or by the defeated couple

now hiding – whose thoughts convicted them, whose words were muted, whose deeds sought to cover their sin and shame. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.

Then in His mercy, the Word came forth, sought out the man and his wife, and what the Word uttered was the Law, and what was said was for their good and for ours. God said to Adam, “Where are you?” (v. 9). “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the Tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (v. 11). To the woman, He said, “What is this that you have done?” (v. 13). Thus the words spoken by the Word give way to the strange work of the Holy Spirit and “through the office of the Law, must ... convince the world of sin,” and rebuke “the unbelief involved in men’s failure to believe in Christ” (FC SD, Art. V).

Thousands of years later St. Paul would declare, “The letter killeth” (2 Corinthians 3:6a), and it is good that it does, for sinful man itches terribly when in the Presence of the Holy One. Because of Adam’s sin, he and his wife had departed from the Presence of the LORD and His Word to them was killing them. Our Lord gets into a boat and Peter pleads with God, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8). Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once more He bend down and wrote with His finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest” (John 8:7-9).

No wonder David declared, “When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer” (Psalm 32:3-4).

But who would confess their sins to God and acknowledge that they had transgressed the will of the Almighty Lord God? I mean, what would God think? What would the Lord say? What would Jesus do? Indeed, we confess that the letter killeth, but where is “the Spirit that giveth life?” (2 Corinthians 3:6b). Dearly beloved, the Spirit that giveth life, giveth it through the Word of God’s Good News – the Lord’s Word of peace and grace concerning our Redeemer. As Adam and Eve once did then and there, you, here and now, listen, for your own good, to the Genesis Gospel as the Lord speaks the Word to Satan, “the dragon, that ancient serpent” (Revelation 20:2).

“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

There is your salvation, O Adam and Eve. Here is your Savior, O sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. But behold, the One Who defeats Satan will not be a son of Adam; but rather, the Seed of the woman. Eve, “the mother of all living,” (Genesis 3:20) would be the mother of the Living One, which is the Christ, Who is Jesus, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. The Seed of the Woman is Emmanuel, which means “God with us,” Who has come to undo the work of the devil, to not fall to the Satan’s temptations, to defeat Lucifer and his legions on our behalf, to suffer the penalty for all our sins in our stead, to die that we might be gifted with eternal life, and to rise again.

Though your thoughts are often sinful, Christ’s thoughts have always been for your good. He thought of you in eternity. Jesus thought of you in His High Priestly prayer and He does to this very moment and always will. That is His promise. No wonder the Church hymns:

Lord Jesus, think on me | And purge away my sin;

From earth-born passions set me free | And make me pure within. (TLH #320)

Though your words are often sinful, Christ's words of Law and Gospel have always been spoken for your good. Listen to but a few of Jesus' words: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). No wonder the Church hymns:

Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word | We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here, | Receive us into glory there. (TLH #292)

Though your deeds are often sinful, Christ's deeds have always been for your good. In thought, word and deed, He fulfilled the Law for you, doing so perfectly, for you. The Seed of the woman has defeated Satan for you and snatched you from the eternal fires. He has taken the burden and blame of all your sins upon Himself and bore them to and on the cross. Jesus has opened heaven for you by the tearing of the temple curtain in two from top to bottom, and by sanctifying your grave by His slumber in and His Resurrection from the tomb. He has, for you, sent the Holy Spirit in order to work faith in you through the Word of the Gospel. Thus, we receive the entire Christ in Holy Baptism (LC Baptism) and Jesus' very Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. Oh, yes, dearly beloved, in deed, "He has done all things well" (Mark 7:37). No wonder the Church hymns:

Yet as the Law must be fulfilled | Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and hath God's anger stilled | Our human nature sharing.
He hath for us the Law obeyed | And thus the Father's vengeance stayed
Which over us impended. (TLH #377).

This is most certainly true. Thanks be to God. That other Word from God is true, as well, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). God can not lie. "As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Romans 5:12). Though the consequences of sin will hang about you and plague you to your last day, they may not bother you one second beyond that instant you depart this life. All pains will end for the Christian, for Christ has endured eternal pain for you. War, contention, hatred, abuse, thorns, thistles, cancer, grief and earthly sweat will all be gone, for that is God's promise in Christ. And when – unless the Lord returns during your lifetime – when you return to dust, it will not be forever, but rather, it will be but the twinkling of an eye. So, "do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28-29). These are the words of Jesus, as are these: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believe Him Who sent Me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

Dearly Beloved, God's thoughts, words and deeds are good for you. Through them He has wrought repentance and brought salvation to you. He has called you His own and you are baptized, you have eternal life and you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

May the peace of the God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, now and forever. Amen.