

PALM SUNDAY – 2008

Isaiah 45: 22 - 25

“Turn to Me and be saved all you ends of the earth.”

Properly understood that is not a command. It is a warm, winning invitation. God holds His saving us in front of us with all of His mercy and love and help and urges us to rely on Him.

It is like a financially blessed person quietly placing a nice amount of money into the hand of a needy person and whispering in his ear, ‘Here, take this.’ Such a ‘take this’ is not a command. It is a warm, caring offer to help mixed with a sincere invitation to take the help.

This “Turn to Me” spoken by God is the same kind of thing. This is the Gospel, the Good News from God and by God, being offered. And note that God offers it to ‘all the ends of the earth.’ It is offered to everyone everywhere. God also wants us to be blessed with the salvation our Savior has for everyone.

Do Turn to the LORD, to God, the Only Savior.

God has sent out His Word. Since God is righteous, He is faithful. So is His Word. It is righteous and it is faithful. “My mouth has uttered in all integrity a Word that will not be revoked.”

We hear a lot about recalls: recalled toys, recalled vehicles, recalled medicines, recalled food, recalled just about anything. God assures us here that He will never recall His Word. Why are things recalled? They are recalled because there is some thing defective about them. This is exactly why God will never need to recall anything, not a single word that has gone out from His mouth. Since God is perfect, so is His Word. God’s Word is sure and certain. Stake your eternity on what God says like “Turn to Me and be saved all you ends of the earth.”

On top of this our Lord and Savior adds an oath. God cannot take His oath by someone higher than Himself, because no one is higher than God. There is not even anyone as high as God. The Scripture says that God in this way makes things doubly sure and certain. He said it. He swears to the truth of it.

About what does our Lord and Savior want so to assure us? This: “Before Me every knee will bow.”

The Apostle Paul quoted this line, as you heard this morning, to the Christians of Philippi. Paul says specifically that everyone, human and angelic, will bow the knee in front of Jesus.

Of course God wants everyone to bow before Him willingly, joyfully, as part of their praise and honor for Him, grateful for salvation. God wants everyone to receive Jesus’ great, total, wonderful salvation and spontaneously to fall to his/her knees in reverent, awestruck thanks.

Sadly, many foolishly decline God’s invitation to be saved. Many rage against God. Why would anyone rage against God? It actually is very common. People are tempted to rage against God because God says things they do not like to hear. There are many people who refer to God and ‘the Big Guy’, or ‘The Man Upstairs’. Those may be rather inadequate attitudes about God but they do not seem particularly ‘raging’. Oh, but those very same people may react with considerable hatred when they find out that God insists that righteousness can be found only in Him, not in them.

Tell people that God calls them unrighteous, poor, lost, helpless sinners and see what they say about God. They may inform you, especially when you tell them that without Jesus all such unrighteous, lost sinners are condemned to eternal death, they may inform you that God must be a monster. They might tell you where to go at that point, too.

The idea that strength is another thing God insists is only in Him does not go down well with proud human beings either. But what strength does a human being have that he (she) has not received from God? None! This is especially true of any spiritual strength. We have no spiritual strength. God's Word describes the natural person as dead in sins and trespasses. A dead person has no strength to do anything. Tell that to a sinner and it may go over equally badly. More raging against God.

All such will nonetheless one day bend the knee in front of the Lord God, Jesus the Savior. But they will not be doing so willingly, or joyfully! They will be put to shame. "All who have raged against Him – finally that is every unbeliever – will come to Him and be put to shame." They will acknowledge Jesus as Lord to their great consternation. Any sin not repented of rages against God.

But that certainly is NOT what God our only Savior really wants. He does not want any sinner to die in impenitence. Our Redeemer wants everyone to turn to Him to be rescued from their sin-caused helplessness.

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength (thinking, choosing, or doing) believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts (like forgiveness, life, salvation), sanctified and kept me in the true faith. He does all of these things for us by means of that sure Word of His."

There is only one true God and Savior. There are not other alternatives.

The LORD alone is righteous. But Jesus is righteous for us to save us. That is why Jesus came to Jerusalem as the lowly servant King. He came to finish the war against our enemies of sin, guilt, death, Satan, and hell. Jesus alone had the strength to do this and did it for us and all the ends of the earth. He supplies His strength to us to believe it.

In Jesus every believer, everyone who exults in Jesus, who speaks his Hosannas and his Hallelujahs (Praise the Lord) is a true descendant, a true seed of Israel, of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, and that person will be found righteous, righteous from and in and because of and through Jesus. That person is saved. He will not rage against Jesus, but will humbly, joyfully bow before Jesus, truly try to worship and honor Him all the time, in every place, in every way he/she is able. All our oaths will be spoken in Jesus' Name. We will confess in word and also in how we live and act that we depend one hundred percent on our Lord and Savior for righteousness and strength. We say, "Jesus is our Lord!" Amen.