

Sermon for October 18th, 2026
TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Isaiah 55:6-9

6 “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalms 27:1-10

**1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?**

**The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?**

2 When evildoers assail me
to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.
3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.
4 One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in his temple.
5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.
6 And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!
8 You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart says to you,
"Your face, LORD, do I seek."
9 Hide not your face from me.
Turn not your servant away in anger,
O you who have been my help.
Cast me not off; forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!
10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
but the LORD will take me in.

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Matthew 22:1-14

1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

Our text for meditation this Twentieth Sunday after Trinity is on our Old Testament reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Occasionally you may hear someone say that the Old Testament is so different that it could not possibly have the same religion presented by the New Testament. Some people go so far as to say that the God of the Old Testament is a *different* deity than the God of the New Testament; this is known as the heresy of Marcionism, named after Marcion of Sinope – a man who was disturbed by some of the

harsher things he read in Scripture. He saw the wars of Israel, the conquest of Canaan, the Great Flood, and more painful consequences of sin and decided that there simply *must* be a different deity behind it. He proclaimed that there was no Gospel in the Old Testament, or if there was it was only a small shadow.

We hear things like this all the time from ignorant people, don't we? They seem to be blind to the fact that the Gospel is *all over the Old Testament!* Yes, the Old Testament has quite a lot to say about human failures, but that does not mean that there was no mercy nor promise of Grace. In our reading, Isaiah presents the road to salvation for any who would live. Though he does not speak of our Lord Jesus by name, he still patterns out the way forward that sounds familiar to any Christian. Let us demonstrate it by commenting on the text.

6 *“Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;*

Isaiah starts by saying God may be found. He is not visible to our eyes, we do not hear His voice with our ears, there is no scent to Him and we cannot touch Him, but He may be found. He dwells in unapproachable light, yet He can be known by His creatures. How then do we seek Him? Before anyone can answer, Isaiah speaks plainly: we must call upon Him. We cannot see God, but God can see us. We cannot hear His voice, but He can hear our prayers. This is the first step in seeking our Lord; starting in any other way is a fool's errand, for we are lost in our quest if we do not have His help. Here his preaching is identical to the New Testament, for just as Christ and the Apostles teach us how much our Lord listens to our prayers, so does Isaiah teach likewise.¹

Isaiah writes as though there is a time limit, a window of opportunity that a man cannot miss or else he shall be lost. How long is this time limit? Your lifespan, my friends. We have until Christ returns or the day we shed our mortal coils to seek His Face. Isaiah says we must call upon Him while He is near: since He is omnipresent, He is *always* near. There is no place that is hidden from Him, and nor is He afar off. But do not delay to call upon Him, for you do not know how many breaths are allotted to you. Some men live a century, some pass on in their youth, and yet others make it to fifty. As you do not know when your time will come, you have no good reason to put off seeking our Lord and His salvation. This immanent judgment is present all over the New Testament as well – for crying out loud, that is the whole point of the Book of Revelation!

7 *let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Truly seeking our Lord starts in earnest with prayer. But then one must repent, and in order to do that you have to look where God has revealed Himself. He listened to us, now it is time for us to listen to Him. This is done by consulting the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit inspired it all and kept it free from any kind of error, making it the perfect record of what God has said to mankind. After seeking His help in our spiritual quest, we must now pay attention to what the Word says – just as the Apostles constantly exhort us to do.

And what does the Bible say? While there are many events and genealogies recounted in the text of Scripture, the message specifically given to each and every one of us is this: we are sinners, and we must turn to our merciful God for forgiveness. It teaches us that God is the all-powerful Judge over all reality, but also that He is the all-compassionate Father who forgives us when we repent. The Word teaches us what to repent *of* as we learn the Ten Commandments: idolatry, blasphemy, dishonoring our

1 Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:4-7, 1 Peter 5:7, and St. Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17

parents, murdering, adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting. These are all Commandments which Christ Himself repeats,² and the Apostles proclaim likewise.³

Isaiah promises that God will abundantly pardon. This is to say, He is not just canceling the record of one's sins and taking away the punishment. That would be *mere* forgiveness. *Abundant* forgiveness tells us that the penitent is given *more* than that. I could forgive a man for slandering me, but still decide to avoid him in case he is tempted to slander me again. Someone might forgive a murderer for killing their loved one, but the murderer still has to pay his debt to the public for justice's sake. Yet the way that God forgives means that the one He pardons is considered part of the family. They are counted as though they had never sinned, and so they receive precious promises of eternal life and healing despite not deserving any of it. This foreshadows the revealing in the Gospel that we are justified by faith and promised a Resurrection unto eternal life.⁴

Furthermore, Isaiah preaches this message of repentance and salvation to people knowing that there is no way they could be saved otherwise. They must hear the message to believe, just as St. Paul says faith comes by hearing.⁵ The prophet knows that the people are dead in their trespasses and sins, unable to save themselves – and this is exactly what our New Testament teaches!⁶ Isaiah proclaims a message wherein God is the only Actor in our salvation, we must wait upon and receive His offer, and this is the very impetus for proclaiming the Gospel today.

*8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.*

*9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Here our Lord shows us that the depths of His ways and wisdom are unsearchable.⁷ His thoughts are higher than ours and He invites us to consider this in the context of forgiveness. Isaiah wrote to a people who could not understand why God would forgive people without them having to make sacrifices. They would not countenance loving someone who did them wrong. Yet just as Scripture tells us that Christ died for us while we were His enemies,⁸ so too does Isaiah proclaim a God who loves people even when they are engaged in inexcusable iniquity. For such is His love that it goes beyond our understanding, but we are exhorted nonetheless to believe, repent and rejoice.

Conclusion

My friends, this is just one instance of Marcion and Marcionism being utterly, completely wrong. There is only one God who gave us both the Old and New Testaments, the Law as well as the Gospel, and there is a veritable *ocean* of passages that reflect this. But if anyone should say to you that the Old Testament does not contain the wealth of mercy and forgiveness that is found in the New, please show them this passage! And may their hearts swell upon hearing of our Lord's free offer of salvation, which endures from even during Isaiah's life to this very day.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

2 Matthew 19:16-19

3 The books of Ephesians and 1 Corinthians stand out in repeating these core rules.

4 Romans 3:20, 1 Corinthians 15

5 Romans 10:17

6 Ephesians 2:5, Colossians 2:13

7 Romans 11:33

8 Romans 5:10