

Text: Luke 22:35-38

I. N. I.

Sermon #1802

You have given us the strongest of assurances, heavenly Father, that You will always watch over the needs of all Your children, even the needs of their bodies. Grant us the grace of contentment so that we always receive Your blessings with thanksgiving and with real benefit to ourselves and our neighbor, in and through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (Luther for the Busy Man, p. 252)

And [Jesus] said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

In Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd and therefore we shall not want, dear fellow redeemed:

Many of us know the 23rd Psalm by heart, certainly the opening line: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It is a creed recited by the Church of Jesus Christ down through the millennia, giving comfort under all sorts of circumstances. Yet we also know that while confessing that our Lord provides all our needs we find ourselves guilty of grumbling and complaining in great discontent at times.

Our text is an exchange Jesus had with His disciples in the upper room, right before leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane where He would be arrested, dragged off for a trial and sentenced to death. By example and instruction Jesus underscores for them and even for us today that **With Christ We Lack Nothing.**

I

However these words are among some of the most puzzling that the Spirit has had recorded for us. Here Jesus tells His disciples to purchase swords and when they tell Him they already have two, He says: "It is enough." Twelve verses later in Luke's account we read how Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Matthew tells us how Jesus then rebukes him saying "all who take the sword will perish by the sword."

To reconcile this seeming contradiction I have seen such suggestions as these: 1. Jesus was only speaking figuratively when He instructed His disciples to buy swords and when He said "It is enough", it was spoken in frustration that they took Him literally; or 2. Jesus set them up to fulfill the prophecy that He would be numbered among the transgressors, wrongdoers who would strike out at others with a sword. Both of these explanations actually contradict what we know of our Lord that He was graciously patient with His disciples and that He would not lead them into sin.

To understand this instruction of our Lord rightly, we need to consider the context. In the upper room the night before His crucifixion Jesus was giving last minute instructions to the eleven. If you read John chapters 13-17 you see there was much instruction that took place at that time in preparation for the next few days of great anxiety and then even in preparation for His visible departure that would take place at His ascension to the right hand of the Father.

Jesus had done much to protect His followers from the violent treachery of His enemies while He was visibly among them, but now they were going to come face to face with it in a matter of hours without His visible presence. They would scatter like sheep without a shepherd. They would be tempted to be unfaithful and some would sin greatly as a result.

But through all they would experience He wanted them to remember that with Him they would lack nothing. So Jesus called to their minds their experience when He sent them out ahead of Him preparing the people for His arrival. He sent them out "with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals". But as they observed, they lacked nothing. Those who heard the message of the kingdom of heaven provided for these messengers. God opened His hand to satisfy all their needs through the generous hands of those who heard the Gospel and believed.

Even to this day during times of relative peace this is how our Lord provides for His messengers. But soon the disciples would experience the hatred and hostility of the world against Jesus firsthand. With the governing authorities unfairly executing their Lord, it would be open season against His followers by the criminals in society. [*Barabas, a convicted murderer was released so that law-abiding Jesus could be executed.*] But God would still provide all that they needed, but it would not be as simple. Their experience before was like coming upon a fruit tree with low hanging

fruit waiting to be picked and eaten. Now however it would be like having to reach deeply into the thorny blackberry bushes to find the last of its succulent ripened fruit. Jesus had spoken of such troubling times before when He had told them to be harmless as doves but as wise as serpents.

II

Our Lord provides for us in many ways. In part He provides for us by giving us intelligence, wisdom, strength and ingenuity. We are not to imagine that the promise to provide all our needs comes without work on our part. We are wisely to use material goods with which we have been blessed, positions and connections we have been given in this life as well, rights and privileges accorded to us by the government.

Now again we might think Jesus' instruction about buying swords contradicts His instruction about turning the other cheek, showing kindness to those who wish to harm us and so forth. But again it depend on the context of all such hostility. We are never to use the sword of violence to advance the kingdom of God. Only the sword of the word is to be used, trusting the Spirit will powerfully convert and save as it is declared. Therefore persecution for confessing the name of our Savior is never to be resisted with violence.

On the other hand, criminal behavior, of which the two thieves crucified next to Jesus were guilty, can and should be resisted. The converted thief recognized the just punishment he and the other criminal were receiving at the hands of the authorities. Jesus does not rule out self-defense on our part in the face of those who disrespect life and limb. We are never to seek personal vengeance, but in the heat of the moment to protect our lives or the lives of others we are required to do all we can to thwart malicious attacks.

III

In the Garden, Peter drew his sword under the wrong circumstances. As Jesus would point out to His unjust accusers that if He were an earthly King defending His subjects, then certainly He would have an army to do that right and proper work of physically resisting. But Jesus came to establish a much different kingdom, an everlasting kingdom, ruled in grace and peace.

Peter tried to stop that which was about to save him and all sinners. Jesus came to suffer and die in payment for all our sin. We now who believe in Him as the one and only Savior are called to remain in the world,

as evil as it is, and to proclaim the good news of God's love for all mankind in the salvation provided through His Son. There will be threats against the Church by those who hate Her Lord, they must be met with the sword of Spirit alone. But living in this evil and perverse generation there are also threats from the criminal element of society as well. Take note that when Jesus rebuked Peter for striking out with his sword in the Garden, He did not tell him to throw out his sword, but to put it back in its sheath, to be used only at the proper time.

We as believers have and will be faced with moral dilemmas at times and we have to make judgments in our responses based on the circumstances that face us. We pray for sanctified wisdom so that in all we say and do our Lord will be praised and our neighbor be rightly served. But we know that we often fail, just like Peter and the other disciples. Our comfort is this that with Christ we lack nothing, for in Him we have forgiveness and are strengthened for holy living. We too go out into that same hostile world prepared to proclaim the praises of Him who has saved us and all people.

Truly Scripture was fulfilled, in that Jesus was numbered with the transgressors like you and me. Before the Father, He was named the sinner for us all. He took our punishment upon that cross, so that we might be forgiven and declared holy for all eternity – we lack nothing for all eternity.

Soon we are going to have two images before us, which depict this great action of God in heaven for us. Starting on the last Sunday of this month, when we celebrate St. Michael and all angel's Day. We will have this image of the Good Shepherd as the Lamb of God sacrificed by the Father for all our sins. Behind that image will be the image of St. Michael the archangel driving out the old dragon, Satan from heaven. On Good Friday, Satan was expelled from heaven with all his accusations against all believers, true though they were, since now the Lamb of God answered for them all. Satan has nothing against us to bring before the courts of heaven. Your deepest darkest sins, perhaps never uttered to anyone have all charged against the crucified One, answered for once and for all even our sins of discontent.

Now He who has provided this for us all, how will He not also provide all that we need even for our bodies and life here and now? Just as the Spirit has enabled us to say with all confidence "*Amen*" to our Shepherd's declaration on the cross for us – "it is finished", so He enables

us to respond with all contentment to His words in our daily lives: "it is enough" - with Christ we truly lack nothing. Amen.