

Trinity 10 – St. Matthew 11:16-24
Jesus Is Still Doing Mighty Works Creating Faith
Even in this Generation

Rev. Samuel Gullixson Ser. #315-16

We pray: Heavenly Father, You never tire of repeating the good news of our forgiveness in Christ Jesus. We humbly pray You, never let us tire of hearing it and receiving it through Your Word and Sacraments. Lead us always to read, mark, learn, and take them to heart so that we believe and live according to Your will. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Whose mighty works of salvation are still happening today.

Dear fellow redeemed,
Do you remember when John the Baptizer was in prison
& sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah?
Jesus told them to remind John of one of Isaiah's prophecies
and to report to him what they saw Jesus doing:
healing the blind, lame, deaf, and lepers, raising the dead,
and preaching the Gospel to the poor.
That is the background for our text for meditation today.

Once those disciples returned to John, Jesus spoke to the crowd
about John and his office as the forerunner of Christ:
John was to preach and prepare the hearts of the people.
His lifestyle was as abrasive as his message of repentance,
living in the wilderness, eating locusts and wild honey,
and wearing clothes of scratchy camel hair & a leather belt.
His preaching was bold and unwavering.

The people flocked to him, at least at first.
He did no mighty work, just preached & administered baptism.
The people were cut to the heart by the harsh preaching,
exposing their sin in no uncertain terms.
Some repented and desired to amend their lives.
These were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.
But there were also those who, while hearing, willfully
shut their ears and hearts to God's Word through John.
Even though they recognized something different about John,
even to the point of asking if he were the Christ,
they didn't think they needed to repent.
They were satisfied with the way they were,
with their level of righteousness and obedience,
especially compared to the evil Gentiles around them.

Brothers and Sisters, let us take our warning from their example.
Let us never rely on our morality nor our own pious opinions,
but instead live... that is, mourn and dance in your Baptism,
mourning with *daily contrition and repentance*,
and dancing as *the new man daily comes forth* (SC:Meaning/Baptism)
on account of the mighty works of Jesus.

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We read as follows in Jesus' name.

[Jesus said,] **"But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,**

**"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'**

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you." (ESV)

So far the Words of our text.

These are Your Words, heavenly Father.

Sanctify [us] in the Truth. Your Word is Truth. (John 17:17)

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I'm sure you understand the simile Jesus is using in our text, likening the people to children who want to set the terms of play, but blame you when you don't want to play their way. One friend says, "Let's play princess. I'll be the princess and you can be my servant." And when the other is, understandably, disinterested he's accused of being a spoilsport.

The Jews in Jesus' day were these children, trying to set the terms for both John and Jesus as to how they should preach. But the game was rigged against God from the beginning, because, as children are known to do, they changed the rules mid-game to fit their own whims.

They played the game of self-denial: fasting at least 2 days/week. They played the game of total devotion to God, tithing mint and anise & following extensive cleansing rituals. But when St. John denied himself far beyond their willingness to, living his life wholly devoted to serving God and washing, not only the outside, but even the people's souls, they lost interest in him, accusing him of being irrational. (Apparently, he was too "self-denying" for their taste.)

And then when Jesus came on the scene, He lived in freedom. He lived a normal Jewish life, except was without sin, observing God's laws and the pious Jewish customs. And yet, they accused Him of excess: gluttony and drunkenness, He was guilty by association with **sinners and tax collectors**, teaching them of God's kingdom of grace and forgiveness.

It wasn't the self-denial/freedom they objected to though, was it? It was the message that the Jews didn't like. John preached repentance; they thought they were good enough. Jesus preached forgiveness; they didn't think they needed it. They were satisfied with their own opinions of piety and obedience, and they didn't want to change. They wanted God to accept them for their righteousness. So they found fault with the messengers to justify their rejection.

The Jewish religious leaders grew in their opposition of Jesus, and hated Him so much they wanted to kill Him. But there was another group in our text that Jesus condemned just as severely, though they did not openly oppose Him.

This group was made up of the apathetic and indifferent people who lived in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. They had been witnesses of most of Jesus' mighty works, and yet, they remained unaffected. They were led, neither to repentance, in fear that that same divine power might be turned upon them for judgment, nor to faith, marveling at the gracious nature and liberality

with which Jesus dispensed His power.

They, too, were like children, not spoilsports, but spoiled,
regarding the miracles as helpful, useful, and even neat,
but trifles, easily forgettable.

These cities, like Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had had their chances
to turn from their ways in contrition and repentance,
through the preaching of God's Word in their midsts,
but they refused, passing on it with indifference.

They rejected their salvation, just as Jerusalem had done
in our Gospel lesson, leading Jesus to weep for them.

Though the Church is in danger of those who vehemently attack it,
Christians are in just as much danger of simply disregarding
what they have seen and heard of Jesus.

It is easy to think that we know all about Him
and don't need to hear it all again, over and over.

It's easy to consider His miracles saying, "Yes, I believe in them,"
but then live as if they mean nothing to you.

It's easy to look down on others who don't believe in them,
and judge them for their lack of faith,
even while they would have ample evidence to accuse you
of the same thing by the way you live or words you speak.

Don't let these examples pass you by unaffected.

That generation is the same as this generation,
being equally affected by Adam's sinful nature.

We, too, desire to set the terms of life,
telling God what He should accept of your pious life.

You try to change the rules mid-game, to suit your whims,
so that when you fail, even to live up to your own standards,
you might still declare your actions as acceptable.

You're prone to thinking of God as a spoilsport when His
commands would keep you from self-destructive behavior.

&You're just as liable to reject & find fault w/God's messengers
because you don't like the message.

And let us also consider Jesus' condemnation of indifference.

We, too, like the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum
are prone to an apathetic response to His gracious power.

Consider how normal and seemingly natural you consider
His absolution... how common His Baptism and

Communion.

They are so regular, so familiar, and so predictably given,
that we must guard ourselves from contempt and neglect,
and pray for the willingness to meditate on them often.

We, too, can be lulled into complacency about hearing of Jesus.

Treating the Gospel as commonly as a child's story,
we've had to read over and over and over again.

But, brothers and sisters in Christ, children of our heavenly Father,
in this respect, let's be children asking for that story again&again.

For how can we get tired of hearing about the gracious God
who not only associates with sinners, but unites Himself to you.

Who not only ate and drank with sinners,
but took your gluttonous and drunken excesses to the cross.

Who not only warns against self-righteousness,
but gives Himself and His righteousness to you.

Unlike us, earthly parents, our Father never tires
of repeating the story to you, week after week, day after day.

Nor does He tire of demonstrating His mighty works for you.

Here at the font and altar and from the pulpit are the mighty
works that that He performs, even today, in this generation.

For by them, He is creating and strengthening faith,
among the spiritually dead and weak mortal man.

Here is where you can satisfy your hunger and slake your thirst
for His true righteousness.

Here is your strength to fight against your many temptations.
And here is the **way of escape from temptation** and the power
to overcome it and **endure** through it. ^{1Cor10:13}

Will you be brought down to hades?

No! *You are baptized into Christ!*

You have been exalted to heaven.

You're a child of paradise. ^{ELH #246:5}

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be forever more.
Soli Deo Gloria*