

We bow our hearts in prayer: Amen.

The theme for Trinity 10 is Renewed Obedience.

But don't think that this is just the occasional call to examine your life and think about how you might be more faithful in the various aspects of your life.

Renewed Obedience is a daily consideration as you **rise up and lie down, as you sit in your house or when you walk by the way.** Deuteronomy 6:7

Our sermon text is a great example of two men with promising futures in Christianity, and both of them fell hard; one to eternal punishment, the other to be raised to life.

But the reason the one was raised back into spiritual life was not because of his recommitment to obedience, but a reliance on God's commitment to forgive through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Our text for meditation today is...

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

After this many of [Jesus'] disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. (ESV)

These are Your Words, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

St. John likes to pair people in his Gospel, for instance,

Nicodemus, the spiritual leader of Israel who struggles to believe in Jesus in chapter 3, is paired with the Samaritan woman at the well, in chapter 4,

who quickly recognizes Jesus as the Christ, and tells her whole village about him.

Well, in our text, St. John is beginning to pair Peter and Judas together.

They were numbered among the 12 Disciples specifically chosen by Jesus.

But this official status did not protect them from spiritual attacks and temptations.

Nor did it give them extra power to believe or obey.

St. John begins to hint at that here when he reports that this particular Judas (Iscariot) was the one who would later betray Jesus.

In contrast, as hinted at in the beginning of our text, after a large number of other disciples had chosen to no longer follow Jesus on account of the difficult things He was saying, Peter speaks for the 12 Disciples and makes a great confession:

You have the words of eternal life... You are the Holy One of God.

While many of the disciples who couldn't take Jesus' sayings, simply left from following Him, Judas, though apparently, he already did not believe, continued to follow Jesus.

For this reason, Jesus calls him "a devil," a devious snake in the grass.

Jesus was certainly aware of Judas' role (St. John makes that plain),

but did not Jesus call Judas out on the carpet, as it were, and force him to leave, or treat him as an unbeliever.

As we must, Jesus allowed Judas to remain among His ranks based on Judas' public assent of Peter's confession,.

By not removing him Jesus gave Judas ample opportunity to hear the Gospel and believe in Jesus as his Savior.

But this is not to say that Peter was the "best" disciple in contrast to Judas Iscariot.

While Peter certainly had a number of moments when his confession of Christ was quite clear and direct, he also had some pretty low moments.

In fact, on one occasion, a high and a low moment were back to back.

After just confessing, **You are the Christ the Son of the Living God,** Matthew 16:16 he refused to want to believe that Jesus would suffer and die.

And after rebuking Jesus for saying such a thing, Jesus turned around and said to him, **"Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me."** Matthew 16:23

St. John again returns to pairing Peter and Judas on the night Jesus was betrayed.

At first, there is not a contrast, but a comparison. Both of them fell into temptation.

Judas obviously was the betrayer, but Peter was the denier.

Even after vehemently denying that he would ever deny Jesus...

And even after trying to kill someone with a sword in Jesus' defense, Peter denied even knowing Jesus.

The similarity continues in that both of them indicated great remorse and sorrow for what they had done: Peter wept and Judas returned the money.

But here is where their similarities end.

Because in Judas' sorrow, he saw no salvation. He did not believe that Jesus was his Savior.

Though he believed that Jesus was innocent of anything deserving death,

and may have believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, **the Holy One of God,** he did not believe that God could save him from his sin.

In despair, Judas ended his own life.

Peter on the other hand, in recognizing his sin, wept bitterly.

His conviction that Jesus was the Christ and that he had denied the promised Messiah struck him hard. And yet, he did not despair to the point of committing suicide.

3 days later, he was blessed to see Jesus resurrected from the grave,

and to be called His brother, and later was reinstated at the Sea of Galilee.

But don't be fooled into thinking that this contrast originated with their character or persons.

It wasn't that Peter had made a firm commitment within himself to believe in Christ, and that Judas neglected to do this.

Or that Peter renewed his obedience after his fall into temptation and so Christ accepted him back, while Judas simply gave up.

No. The contrast was all in Christ and His work.

Peter confesses this in our text, when he says,

"We have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God."

In saying that they had **"come to know"** these things, he acknowledges

that they were given this knowledge and faith from somewhere outside of them,
specifically from God's Word (the Scriptures) and from Jesus, the Son of God.
And Jesus' response confirms this when He said, "**Did I not choose you, the twelve?**"
At another time Jesus said it more clearly, "**...flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,
but My Father who is in heaven.**"^{Matthew 16:17}
And again, as Peter boasts that he would never deny Jesus,
Jesus tells him that **Satan demanded to have him, that he might sift him like wheat,
but that Jesus prayed for him that his faith may not fail.** ^{Luke 22:31-32}

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are of the same flesh and blood as Judas and Peter. We share the same corruption of sin.
We share the same lack of original knowledge of our gracious Triune God and of His Christ.
It is not within us to come to believe in Jesus or accept Him as our Savior.
Like with St. Peter, this is a gift of the Father, given by the work of the Holy Spirit.
This gift is given through Baptism and the preaching of God's Word.
It is strengthened and nourished by participation in the Holy Communion.

In consideration of our theme this week of Renewed Obedience,
do not regard this to be a call to recommit yourself to obeying the Ten Commandments,
as though you are able to make such a life-changing alteration,
nor be so proud, as Peter was, to think that you are strong enough to keep yourself
from falling into temptation or out of the faith.

Instead, consider the words of our opening prayer this morning:

*We pray You, O Lord, to open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit,
that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught
to repent of our sins,
to believe on Jesus in life and death, and
to grow day by day in grace and holiness.*

The Renewed Obedience we preach here is your daily return to your Baptism,
as you confess your sins to God in sorrow and contrition,
and, by what you have come to know of Jesus through the preaching
of His Word, believe that He is your Savior, who suffered and died to pay for your sins,
and to live a perfect life of faith and love in your place.
God's gifts of faith and spiritual life in Baptism will produce the growth in grace and holiness,
as you recognize more and more the inadequacy of your own works,
and depend only on Christ's works for your salvation, that is: His obedience renewed in you.

Soli Deo Gloria