

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ephesians 5:15-20

Wisdom sets her table with bread from heaven.

It is easy to lament yesterday. It is easy to call to mind what could have been, what should have been, what would have been, if only this or that had happened, if only we had taken this path or made that decision. We can lament yesterday for all of our tomorrows if we are not careful. You've all met those people. Perhaps, for a time, you've been those people. Perhaps, right now, you are that person. You look in the mirror and see the past, gray hairs and wrinkles. Life in rewind is tempting. It is like those Choose Your Own Adventure books some of us read as kids. Where would we be now if we had chosen "B" over "A" or "D" over "C." We want to go back and read all the chapters, live out all the possibilities in our head. Yesterday is the best soap opera ever created. It never ends, and it is always enthralling. Food tastes better, girls look prettier, muscles feel bigger, all in yesterday. But yesterday will always remain fading glory or lingering shame. Yesterday can be lamented, but it can never be relived, just as, oftentimes, we are tempted to think it can never be lived down.

It is easy to worry about tomorrow. It is easy to consider what might be, what could be, what should be, what would be, if only this or that will happen, if only we take this path or make that decision. We can worry about tomorrow for all of our tomorrows if we are not careful. You've all met those people. Perhaps, for a time, you've been those people. Perhaps, right now, you are that person. You look into the mirror and see the future, gray hair and wrinkles. Life in fast-forward is tempting. It is like those Choose Your Own Adventure books some of us read as kids. What will we be if we choose "A" over "B" or "C" over "D." We want to run through all the chapters, live out all the possibilities in our head. Tomorrow is the best soap opera ever created. It never ends, and is always enthralling. Food tastes better, girls look prettier, muscles feel bigger, all in tomorrow. But tomorrow will always remain dreamt of glory and looming shame. Tomorrow can be imagined, but it can never be pre-lived, just as, oftentimes, we are tempted to think it can never be lived out.

Yesterday and tomorrow are powerful forces, especially in the Devil's hands. When he swings them right, he can knock us clear out of today and Christ's invitation to the folly of the past or the future. St. Augustine speaks wisely when he reminds us, "Time never takes time off." Today, in our second lesson, St. Paul speaks similarly, "*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*"

Maybe, like me, you've had this happen to you. You're moving, or rearranging a room, and start going through a box of old things. Maybe memories start coming back, you laugh at some pictures, and take some time strolling down memory lane. Then you find an old card. You open it up, and, lo and behold, there is a check from five or ten years ago. You'd set it aside and never cashed it. You hadn't redeemed it. And, now, all that time later, it is too late. You kick yourself. Perhaps the things you could have bought run through your mind. You could have got that old out of print German book you wanted. You could have bought the Katie Luther bobble head to go with your Martin Luther one. You didn't redeem the time.

The fool sets aside the things of God for a later time. Perhaps he is young, many years under the life expectancy published by the government. Perhaps she is busy, preoccupied with work or family or friends. Whatever the reason, it is not so much a conscious rejection of the things of God. It is a putting off of them for the time. They've not been thrown away, just set aside for another day, packed in a box in the closet, to be opened when the time comes to rearrange life, after whatever is too important now is out of the system. But the days are evil. They have a way of distracting, of building a false sense of confidence or a plaguing sense of despair. And, without even thinking about it, that box is buried deeper day by day under the other things that have been accumulated, set aside, packed for later. And, then, God forbid, the young man is no longer young, and the busy woman is no longer busy, but rather the days of both have passed, and the things of God remained unopened. The cross was never cashed in and, therefore, its benefits were lost, and what was given to them was never redeemed.

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Christ has set the table. He appeals with you to leave such simple thinking as would lose the eternity offered today behind yesterday or tomorrow, as the greater sun is lost behind the moon in an eclipse. Jesus says, *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

Yesterday is buried in Christ's grave. Tomorrow is seated at the right hand of God. Today is today. Don't pack salvation away. Don't bury the things of God under other concerns. St. Paul uses the sin of drunkenness for a reason. It renders one incapable of watchfulness and offers a cheap and at the same time costly escape from the present. Now is the time of God's favor. Now is the time to receive every piece of God's Bread, to store it up in faith for eternity. Luther uses Aesop's fable of the grasshopper and the ant to illustrate the point. The grasshopper spent the warm months singing away, while the ant stored up every morsel of food he could find. When winter came, the grasshopper begged the ant for food, to which the ant replied that, since the grasshopper sang away the summer, he should dance away the winter.

Today His mercy calls us to stop and sit down with Him. Today. Wisdom sets her table with Bread from Heaven. That Bread is on the table, not down the road. Wisdom is calling now, not setting a future date. This is the time, not for singing away the summer, but for grabbing every morsel of the Bread of Life that is offered to us. Jesus' sacrifice is set out for you to partake of through faith. Your past is forgiven in Christ and your eternal future is guaranteed with the Spirit. There is nothing left to do but thank Him in the present, rejoicing, even in our trials, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, encouraging each other with the Word, both spoken and sung, training our voices for the choirs of heaven, where heart and mouth will join in eternal concert as, with sanctified tongue and washed souls, we express in gratefulness what has been done for us in grace. Wisdom calls. The Bread of Life is served. What are you waiting for? Amen.