

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

In our Gospel text before us, we hear Jesus teach us a bit about who He is and what He came to do. He'll do it in different ways in the weeks to come, in parables, for example. But here He speaks very plainly, I think.

We know that Jesus had sent out His apostles in the weeks before His teaching today. And He had gone on "*to teach and preach in their cities*" (Matt. 11:1). He was giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, making the lame to walk, cleansing the lepers, raising up the dead. Jesus sent some of John the Baptist's disciples back to him with this news, to encourage him while he languished in prison.

It may be hard to imagine amidst all this, but Jesus had begun to experience opposition. People accused John of having a demon, and they accused Jesus of being a glutton who ate with sinners and tax collectors. Resistance and accusation are what Jesus was experiencing as He performed His signs and wonders in the various cities—resistance and accusation, not repentance and faith. "*Woe,*" He pronounced upon them. "*It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you*" (Matt. 11:24).

This is the context in which Jesus teaches us today about the "*Lord of heaven and earth.*"

He teaches us, first, that all that was proceeding was according to the Father's good pleasure. The Father remained as well pleased now with His beloved Son as He was when Jesus began His ministry with His Jordan River baptism. Humble and lowly did our King come unto us, riding first into His creation on the humble womb of his maidservant mother Mary, and later on "*mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*"

Moreover, that good pleasure of the Father was and is to hide and reveal—hide from "*the wise and understanding,*" and reveal to "*little children*" or at least, those who turn and become as little children (Matt. 18:3). Truly, righteousness and salvation were hidden in Jesus, our humble King, whose very name bears witness to His purpose—"*call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins*" (Matt. 1:21). Greatness was hidden in this everlasting King, and also strength to scatter the proud and put down the mighty and send away the rich empty, but also to fill the hungry and exalt the lowly and show mercy on the faithful.

This hidden wisdom of God comes to its climax on the cross—rejected as foolishness and weakness by the wise and understanding, who only seem to understand the "*wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age*" (1 Cor. 2:6).

God's wisdom and God's power, on the other hand, are revealed to us by the Spirit in simple words of "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2): weak

words to shame the strong; foolish words to shame the wise. Our faith rests not *in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*” (1 Cor. 2:5).

Second, Jesus teaches us here, as He and His apostles do elsewhere in the Scripture, that our salvation is a gift from the Father through the Son. It cannot be achieved by our own striving. St. Paul confessed: *“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”* And Jesus taught elsewhere, *“the flesh is no help at all”* (John 6:63). What wretched people we all are! Who will deliver us from the death our sins deserve?

*“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* It is only by God’s grace through faith in the Son that we are saved, and that faith comes to us as the words of Christ are heard — words that reveal our loving Father to us—and, by the Holy Spirit, are believed. *“This is eternal life,”* Jesus would later pray to the Father, *“that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* Yes, we know the God of love in the sending of His only Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin; and we know the Son, not as the Father knows Him, for now we know only in part (1 Cor. 13:12), but we know Him as the One who loved enough to lay down His life for us. Life is ours as we look to Him and believe in Him.

Therefore, third, because of this, Jesus’ invitation to the weary, to the wandering, to the fainting is real; it’s genuine. *“Come to me,”* He says, *“all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

Jesus does not issue this invitation to the wise and understanding; He invites not the strong but the weak, not the healthy but the sick, not the righteous but sinners. In fact, in everything, it is the ravages of sin that weigh us down. It’s the sins we commit against one another that plague our consciences and cause us anxiety: repent! Don’t be like the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida who refused to repent, that woes may not be spoken to you! Come and bear the easy yoke of Jesus that sends away your sins.

It’s perhaps the guilt of doubts or the shame of unfaithfulness that weigh us down and keep us away from the very medicine that Jesus wants to dispense — forgiveness through faith in Him, the absolution spoken, the body and blood eaten for our forgiveness. *“Come to me,”* Jesus says. *“I want to give you rest. I want to take that yoke of guilt from you. I want to bear it myself.”*

It’s the fear of sin-caused illness and death that weighs us down and often causes us to lose heart. Therefore, Jesus invites us: *“Come to me. I am your ‘refuge and [your] fortress.’ Dwell with me now, and when you pass through death, you will find eternal shelter with me”* (See Ps. 91). For Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world, to give us life (John 3:17).

God does not want us to lose heart at our *“light momentary afflictions”* for we have *“an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”* awaiting us (2 Cor. 4:17). Thus, He gives us His apostle to encourage us as illness comes upon us or death draws near. St. Paul writes, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Not God, he answers. *“He ... did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.”*

There, amidst our weariness and our wandering and our faintheartedness, is God for us in His Son, hidden in weak flesh and shameful cross and death. Come to this One, hidden still in words of forgiveness heard today, body and blood hidden in humble bread and wine given for you. Come to Him, for in Him, God’s own Son, God does not condemn us. No, by Him, God has justified us, by death and resurrection and ascension to God’s right hand. And Jesus is there for us still in our laboring with our burdens; He’s there *“interceding for us.”*

Let us come to Him today; come to the Savior’s table for weak and weary are our souls; eat His body and drink His blood and rest in Him, assured that nothing *“shall separate us from [His] love”*: not *“tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword.”* *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”* Nothing *“will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 8:31-39).

So, *“Come unto [Jesus] ye weary, and [He] will give you rest.”* *“Come unto [Jesus] ye wand’ers, and [He] will give you light.”* *“Come unto [Jesus] ye fainting, and [He] will give you life.”* *“And whosoever cometh, [Jesus] will not cast him out. O patient love of Jesus, which drives away our doubt, Which though we be unworthy Of love so great and free, Invites us very sinners to come dear Lord, to Thee.”*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.