

Today we celebrated a joint Divine Service of Reconciliation with Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria. Both Pastor Esget of Immanuel and I preached homilies. This is mine on the Old Testament and Epistle.

Jesu Juva

“Not a Status Quo God; Not Status Quo Christians”

Text: Daniel 7:9-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Deadlines are good for me. They force me to focus on what matters and put aside what does not.

So the End of the Church Year is good for me. That I hear each year that there is an end to this world. There is a Judgment Day. There is coming a new heavens and a new earth. The resurrection of the dead. The bridegroom soon will call us to the heavenly wedding feast. Such a call each year re-focuses me, and brings clarity again to what matters and what does not.

And what we are doing here today matters.

The reading from Daniel today helps me to see that; to realize it once again. That the day of judgment is coming. The day when the Ancient of Days will sit on His throne, the court will be called to order, and the books opened.

Now if you are a financial person or even just from your own personal finances, you know about balancing the books. Some people think about Judgment Day like that. That as long as I balance the good and the bad, as long as there's more income than debt, more good than bad, then I'm good. My books are in order.

But of course, with the Ancient of Days it's not like that. The debt of my sin, the debt of your sin, can never be balanced.

Yet it seems to me that's what we keep trying to do. For when we hold grudges, when we refuse to forgive, when we withhold mercy and love, I'm telling God that I'll balance that part of the books myself, my own way, not your way. But we don't. We can't.

Then we get used to the *status quo*, or the way things are. We get used to hard feelings, grudges, disagreements, sin, division. It's easy to just let things be, let things go, let sleeping dogs lie. It's easy, but not good.

So the good news for us is that God is not a *status quo* God. Never has been, never will be. He is a speaking God, an acting God, because He's a loving God. And love speaks. Love acts.

And so God is never leaving His people alone. He is always coming to us, speaking to us, loving us, serving us, caring for us, disciplining us. Because we are His. From the very beginning, when Adam and Eve hid themselves from God, to the end, to the Last Day, God will continue to come and speak and act. He can do no less. He will call us to repentance, and He will send His Son. Not to judge; not yet. Rather **now**, St. Paul said, **is the day** not of judgment, but **of salvation**. Now is the day for repentance and forgiveness.

And so the Son of Man came, and He balanced the books - no, more than that, He paid the debt, completely, with His blood. Knowing no sin, having no sin, He became the sin offering, **so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God**. So that in Him, we be **reconciled to God**. At peace with God. And so we are. You are as you are baptized into Christ. You are as His Blood is poured into You. You are as eating His Body, His flesh becomes one with your flesh. *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). In Jesus you are new, **a new creation**, St. Paul said. A new you, for the new heavens and the new earth.

But if you're like me, you don't feel very new. Each day you wake up and the old Adam wakes up right there with you, in you. He's stubborn, and persistent. That's why Luther said that when you wake up each day, make the sign of the cross and remember that you are baptized and drown that old man again. That's not who you are. That's not how you will live this day.

And it's also why we are gathered here this day. To hear our speaking, acting, loving, serving God speak to us again, through His ambassadors. To repent our Old Adam, and hear the voice of Christ say to us again: *I forgive you all your sins*, and know that those words are true and sure. The Spirit working through these words and bringing the goods, the gifts. The Spirit creating in us new and clean hearts, and renewing a right spirit within us (Psalm 51). So that we be reconciled not only with God, but also with each other.

For how can we not? How can we all be together, one in Christ, and yet divided, separated from each other, unforgiving and unforgiven? It cannot be.

And so Christ has given to His Church the ministry of reconciliation. That what God has joined together and sin has rent asunder may be made whole again in the forgiveness of sin. That we never be satisfied with the *status quo*, the way things are, but again as St. Paul said, **controlled by the love of Christ**, the Spirit of Christ, we too speak, act, love, serve, and forgive one another.

And all the more as we see the Day approaching, bringing clarity to what matters and

what does not. This matters.

My sadness today is that not everyone is here who was here in those sad and tumultuous days so many years ago. Some are at rest and awaiting the day of resurrection, some have moved away, and some have left for other reasons or to other confessions. May the Lord complete what we are unable to do.

But my joy is that we are here today, kneeling side-by-side in repentance, and receiving side-by-side the forgiveness of Christ. Embracing one another again, as our Saviour, in love, embraced us. ***No longer living for [our]selves, but for Him who for our sake died and was raised.*** And living for each other. For I am my brother's keeper, and he mine. I need him and he me. And so ***not receiving the grace of God in vain,*** but living the life we have so graciously been given.

Living in the grace of God that has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.
Living in the grace of God that has made us one flock, under one Shepherd.
Living in the grace of God that has made us brothers and sisters, one in Christ.
Living in the grace of God that gives joy and peace and unity.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.