

July 30, 2017

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

“The Saving Perspective”

Matthew 13:44-52

It’s a matter of perspective, I guess. We all have our own perspective from which we look at things. A family walks through the mall and approaches a Baskin-Robbins. The children become excited, the husband is interested, but Mom is thinking about the mess and her hubby’s waistline and it apprehensive. Farther on Best Buy has a new 120” HD TV and Dad smiles, wondering how to make room on the living room wall, and the kids are just confused...confused about why Mom is saying “No...No... No!” Then Shoe Carnival is having a 50% off sale and Mom voices a loud cry of glee as the rest of the family let’s out a sigh of defeated despair, knowing there will be no escape. It’s all in one’s perspective.

Unfortunately, I think the perspective many people have about coming before righteous and holy Almighty God is the very thing that comes between them and Almighty God.

Like young Martin Luther, many folks see Almighty God as angry in His righteousness and holiness—angry at them because they fail to keep His commandments. Jesus says “*The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” and they just know He must be talking about them.

This causes a lot of folks simply to push God away. They think what’s the point in following a God whose standards you will never ever measure up to. Lots of people decide to simply live life apart from God and then just deal with whatever happens when you die. I’ve known a few who live life openly angry with God because they think His judgment is somehow mean and unfair. Many today simply remake God in their own image, ignore the clear teaching of Holy Scripture in favor of some fantasy God who simply is okay with them and their sin.

And this isn’t just them. It’s us. Believers have places where we fail to obey God’s commandments, yet we just kind of pretend He’s not watching and disobey anyway, pushing Him away, out of our psyche. Christians have moments we think God unfair, overbearing and we resent His lordship. We all at times try to make God in our image in an effort to somehow make our sin acceptable.

All this stems from a simple knowledge of truth; we are poor, miserable sinners daily falling short of that perfection which is the requirement to be acceptable to God. From the perspective of poor, miserable sinners, raising one’s eyes to behold the righteous, Almighty God is a terrifying prospect because we know we are unable to abide in His holy presence.

Of course, some assume a different perspective, that of a Pharisee. These look around the world and what do they see? All the poor miserable sinners...and they think they’re so much better than these that God must be happy with them. These are the self-righteous, both inside and outside of the church, who simply think they are good and righteous enough for whatever image of God they’ve made for themselves.

Yet these also push God away. They push Him away because they’re too busy looking in the mirror. They don’t feel the need for God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness, so they don’t really seek Him. From their perspective, the righteousness and holiness is theirs. And then when bad stuff happens, as it inevitably does, guess what? God is a big meanie because they aren’t receiving the blessings they deserve.

The thing is, God's Word really isn't concerned with our perspective. Most of the time the Bible is revealing God's perspective, because His perspective is really the only one that matters. He is the Creator, the provider, the redeemer, the judge, and the ruler of eternity. Does my perspective really matter a hill of beans? And when we see things from God's perspective, we don't see harsh judge. God's perspective is Gospel good news.

Consider two of Jesus' parables: *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."*

From God's perspective we are not poor, miserable sinners to be shunned and damned. We are a precious treasure worth great sacrifice—the complete sacrifice of God, dead on a cross! You, individually, are a pearl of great value for which God will go to every length to possess!

From God's perspective, we are not in the crosshairs of wrath. We are the object of His love. *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

From the very beginning God created us to be His people dwelling in His presence forever. That longing of God has never ceased. In the very day of our rebellion when mankind fell by the sin of Adam, God promised the redemption by which He would call sinners back to Himself. He called the people of Israel for His treasured possession by the old covenant. In the new covenant fulfilled in Christ Jesus He has redeemed mankind for forgiveness, life and salvation.

God's perspective, revealed again and again in Holy Scripture, is the perspective of loving Father longing to bless His children with every good gift He can give us.

Our biggest problem is that we are egotistical children, steeped in a selfishness which sees the world only in terms of our own sin-darkened perspective according to a short, broken life in a fallen world lacking anything approaching the abounding love which proceeds from God above. In this we can't help but drive a wedge between ourselves and God, because we have the perspective of wanting to be God, thus the true God always ends up being the competition, the opponent, the enemy.

But God, being the one true God of steadfast love and mercy, calls to us by His Word and Spirit, to see things from His perspective by His Gospel of Christ Jesus. He baptizes us out of ourselves and into Christ's death and resurrection for us. He feeds us Christ's own body and blood that we might taste and see that the Lord is good. He calls us together in worship that we would hear His Word, break our hearts of stone, and see life anew from the perspective of the one who gives us life by sacrificing that of Himself/His Son.

I realize this sermon may not resonate with everyone. But if you are struggling in your faith, in your relationship with God, because you're thinking He has somehow been mean or unjust or just not the kind of God you want Him to be, think about what perspective you're thinking from—yours or His?

He is a God of love and mercy who has gone and continues to go to incredible lengths to save you for eternity. If His hand were against you, you'd already be gone. His goal has always been to redeem you, save you, love you beyond the broken life and into His presence for eternity. Realize this, repent, and received this gift.

God's perspective is that you are precious, and He sacrificed all to make you His. His perspective is best, so let go of yourself, and let that happen.

Amen.