

**Psalm 147 Galatians 4:21-31 St. John 6:1-14**

Christian Confidence

Have you ever wondered why the story of Israel begins with the creation of the world and not with the Exodus or even with the calling of Abraham? Well, this is because the goal of God's specific dealings with His particular chosen people was for the redemption (or recreation, if you will) of all of creation. The general movement of the biblical drama is towards a renewed heaven and renewed earth and the healing of all nations...and the principal instrument through which God brings this new creation into being (other than Himself) is His people...His Body, as it were.

This idea is brought home to us in our Psalm for this Sunday, Psalm 147. Just think about it. The force behind everything we observe, whether snow, frost or hail storms, or that warmth that melts it all down, or the wind that blows and the water that flows...all of this has a personal face behind it. These are not simply observable manifestations of an impersonal thing called "Nature". No, there is a Someone behind this all...a Someone Who can be known because He has declared Himself to us and has made Himself known to us in His Word. And it is this Someone Who both created and controls all things Who tenderly cares for His people. It is He Who builds us up...it is He Who gathers us together...it is He Who heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. The same One Who knows the number of the billions and billions of stars out there and calls each one by a name of His choosing is the One Who looks out for you. The same One Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain to fall on the earth, Who makes the grass to grow on the mountains, Who provides food for the birds and beasts...this same One provides for us all!

Now, remember when God created the world, He created it all out of nothing...*ex nihilo* is the fancy theological term for it...He simply spoke and creation happened. But unlike the Deists who believe that He stepped out of the picture after the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the Scriptures are at pains to show that God has always been involved – He has always been working as Jesus said – He has always upheld what He made by that same Word that made everything in the first place. In other words, God created all things and He sustains all things. He continues to be involved in what He has made. Now, this is important to us because it is foundational to the confidence we have in God as Christians. The same one Who made all things maintains all things...and if He made it and maintains it, He must know what's best for it, right? Do you follow the logic? And He also know exactly what we need in order to function as He designed us to function...to live as we ought to live in His world.

Our Lord made this clear in the Sermon on the Mount when He said that as believers in a good God Who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field (in other words, a God Who sustains and maintains His own creation) we should trust that He knows all the things we need even before we ask Him. And therefore anxiety and worry has no place in the lives of those who profess faith in the God of the Scriptures. Think on this, dearest brethren: God made all things and therefore all things are His. God upholds all things that He created and therefore everything that exists continues to exist because He actively wills it so. This God knows what we need because He made us. Consequently, we who know Him because He has declared Himself to us through His Word ought to have great confidence that not only is He is well able to provide what we need because He is infinitely powerful, but He also knows exactly what we need when we need it and

will withhold no good thing from us because He is infinitely good. In short, God can and will provide that which He knows we need in order to live as He has created us to live.

So, what does this mean for us who are called to follow in the footsteps of our Lord?

Well, for one it means we ought never to lack faith in His ability to do what we cannot do on our own. This is what verses 10 and 11 of Psalm 147 mean. “He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.” God doesn’t need that which we esteem powerful in order to do what He has promised! After all, He created everything out of nothing!

This is clearly illustrated in our Gospel lesson for today. As always, here we see that our Lord’s focus was on others, not on Himself...and as He looked out on the multitude of people gathered all around Him, He had compassion on them and wanted to provide for their needs. Now, keep in mind that Jesus is God incarnate and one of the reasons He came into the world, other than to die for the sins of mankind, was to reveal to us the character and nature of our God. And here He shows us the heart of God. He was concerned about the physical needs of those who had followed Him. But notice how (before He provided for these needs) He first tested St. Phillip’s faith in Him...and this is no different from when He tests our faith in Him. Think about this: He Who made and sustains and maintains the heavens and the earth wanted to feed a huge crowd. The question put to St. Phillip should have been easy to answer. “Where shall we buy bread, that these (five thousand plus) may eat?” Dearest brethren, instead of looking immediately to the lack of personal resources, which is exactly what the disciple did at this point, he and we should rather immediately look to the One Who wills us to do

whatever He calls us to do. Surely we ought to understand as believers that what is impossible for us is possible for the One Who made all things out of nothing...but all too often we don't, do we? We look to our proverbial horses and our own strength...things that do not impress God at all. No, rather God looks to our heart and He is impressed when He sees our confidence in Him...when He sees our faith in His ability to provide what we need to do His will.

He who spoke the universe into being – He Who sustains and maintains creation itself – He Who knows all the stars in galaxies yet undiscovered by finite humanity – He Who presides over the wind and the waves and the weather – He Who multiplied five barley loaves and two small fishes into a meal to feed five thousand plus – He is well able to take the little we have to offer – our meager resources – our small numbers – He is well able to take it and to make it into exactly what we need in order to fulfill His will. Is He not?

And what exactly is His will for us as His people? Well, it is the same will He had with Israel and it is the same will He had with His Son...it is the redemption of the whole of His creation. The God of Heaven has chosen us to be His witnesses...the King of the universe has appointed us to be His ambassadors. He sent His Son into the world to reconcile the world to Himself...and just as Jesus was sent, so too are we sent...in other words, dearest beloved brethren, God has given us (you and me) the privilege of making that reconciliation known to the whole world. So, if He wills for us to make Him known to all nations, will He not provide what we need in order to do His will? And, indeed, will He not provide in abundance? So, why do we repeatedly look to our lack of

resources? Is that not an expression of a lack of faith? Should we not rather turn to Him in prayer and (of course, after establishing that it really is His will for us to do whatever it is we think He wants us to do) ask Him to provide whatever we need to fulfill His will? Is that not what Psalm 147 teaches? Is that not what we learn from our Gospel lesson? We are children of the promise after all. If God fulfilled His promise to reconcile us to Himself, will He not also fulfill His promise to provide what we need to make that act of reconciliation known to all creation? Because that is what He called us to do.

Again, this is the message of the Eucharist. God did as He promised. He did what was necessary to reconcile His rebellious creatures to Himself. It cost Him everything, but He did it. He Who was the Agent of Creation became the Agent of the recreation. The same Word that spoke creation into existence spoke on the cross: "It is finished." And then He rested in the tomb on the seventh day to announce the inauguration of the new creation on the eighth day – the new first day – the day of the resurrection. The penalty has been paid in full and consequently mankind and creation itself can be reconciled to God through putting their faith and trust in the finished, "re-creative" work of Jesus. But as is the case with regard to creation, the recreation is not something that happened once in time and now we have to make it on our own. No! Just as the Creator continues to sustain and maintain His creation, so He continues to sustain and maintain those whom He has called to be His own people...the instrument through which He now works to bring about the new heavens and the new earth...those whom He has called to be His spokespeople...those whom He has called to be His witnesses...His ambassadors. He constantly provides us with what we need to do His will.

So, dearest beloved brethren, as you once more come to receive the symbols of this gracious and precious provision of recreation, restoration, reconciliation, renewal, and resurrection, ask Him from whom all good gifts come, to give us all the gift of greater faith in Him, so that we, as His people might step out in faith, trusting not in our own meager resources nor in our own finite strength, but rather trusting in Him as we look to Him to provide whatever we need to be His witnesses here in Greenville, throughout our State, our nation and indeed, to the ends of His world.

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