

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

SUNDAY.

Many are called, but few are chosen. – Matthew 22:14.

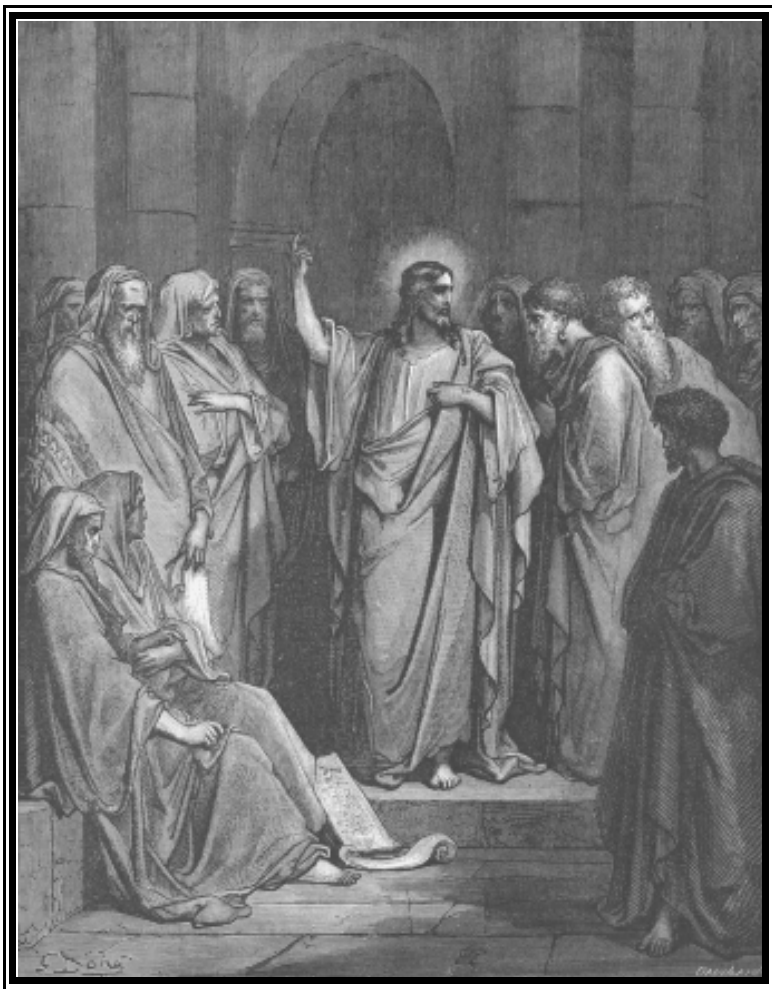


Illustration: Jesus in the Synagogue

A Devotional for the

Week of Sexagesima* Sunday.

On Tuesday morning, in the temple, Jesus also spoke the following parable to the chief priests and elders who hated Him: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying: Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed these murderers, and burned their city." This part of the parable plainly refers to the unbelieving Jews.

The Lord continued: "Then saith he to his servants: The wedding is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So the servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." This refers to the remnant in Israel and to the converted heathen.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants: Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here a man is portrayed who maintains outward affiliation with the Church of Christ, but does not, in true faith, lay hold on Christ's merit. Finally the Lord said: "For many are called, but few are chosen." So in this parable He shows that God fervently and with great mercy calls many to His salvation who are still lost through their own fault. And there are but few elect of God who truly comfort themselves with the merit of Christ, and lay hold on His salvation. Do you do it, reader?

PRAYER. – Almighty and eternal God, who, from pure and undeserved mercy in Christ Jesus, does offer righteousness and eternal life to us poor sinners, freely and without price, I beg Your mercy graciously to keep me, that I may not despise nor forfeit Your divine grace; and give to me Your good spirit, that I may lay hold on the same in true faith, and walk worthily of the same in true sanctification: through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 545, 1.

I FALL asleep in Jesus' wounds,
There pardon for my sins abounds;
Yes, Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I stand
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

MONDAY.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.– Matthew 22:32.

On Tuesday, in the temple, our Lord was tried and tempted a great deal by His enemies, the hardened Pharisees and Sadducees. The latter, who said that there is no resurrection, came and asked Him, saying: "Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother; likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her." Jesus answered and said unto them: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which

was spoken unto you by God, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:23-32.)

If through faith in your Savior you are a child of God, so that God is your God and Father, then God will not leave you in death, but raise you from the dead; for He will not be the God and Father of the dead, but of the living. This is what Jesus Christ has taught, and His Word – also in many ways and places – teaches the resurrection of the dead. In the resurrection, however, there will be no marrying nor giving in marriage; we shall be no longer subject to the laws and regulations of this terrestrial life, for we shall have spiritual bodies. These the power of God, which is boundless, will give us. So let not the spiteful drivel of those who know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God confuse you.

PRAYER. – Grant, O faithful God, that I may be and remain Your child through faith in my Lord and Savior, depart this life in blessed peace, holding fast to Your grace, rest in my grave under Your protection, rise by Your power, and thus inherit the blessed hope – eternal life – for the sake of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with You and the Holy Ghost, be praise, honor, and glory, now and evermore. Amen.

Hymn 534.

AND must this body die, | This mortal frame decay?
And must these active limbs of mine | Lie mouldering in the clay?

God my Redeemer lives, | And ever from the skies
Looks down and watches all my dust, | Till He shall bid it rise.

Arrayed in glorious grace | Shall these vile bodies shine,
And every shape, and every face, | Look heavenly and divine.

These lively hopes we owe | To Jesus' dying love:
We would adore His grace below | And sing His power above.

Dear Lord, accept the praise | Of these our humble songs,
Till tunes of nobler sound we raise | With our immortal tongues.

TUESDAY.

I, even I, am th Lord; and beside me there is no Savior.
– *Isaiah 43:11.*

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, trying Him, and saying: "Master, which is the great commandment of the Law?" Jesus said unto him: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets." So instead of walking into the open trap, and setting one commandment above the other, our Lord recited the sum of all commandments and of all their explanations, which is the love toward God and toward the neighbor. But who dare boast of this love? Who can thereby become righteous before God and be saved? Not one. – Now, while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them: "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said unto Him: "The son of David." He said unto them: "How, then, doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying: The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David, then, called Him Lord, how is He his son? " And no man was able to answer Him a word. And the trials were at an end. (Matthew 22, 34-46.)

True, Christ is the son of David. But at the same time Christ is He who through the prophet said: " I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior." And *Jesus* is the Lord who became David's son and our only Savior. And He, through His vicarious life, suffering, death, and resurrection, procured for us that righteousness which we sinners could never bring about by the fulfillment of the Law. Let us look to Him in faith, then shall we be righteous before God and obtain life eternal.

PRAYER. – O Jesus Christ, my Lord and God – Lord and God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David, and of all who in all ages desired Your salvation – I give thanks to You, for You have kept Your gracious Word, and by Your salutary birth and by Your bitter suffering and death did make Yourself our Savior. Truly, besides You there is no Savior. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit I may bow my knees before You in firm confidence, and be and remain a partaker of Your salvation, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost are true God, blessed forever. Amen.

Hymn 93, 3. 4.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race, | Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him, who saves you by His grace, | And crown Him Lord of all.

Hail Him, ye heirs of David's line, | Whom David Lord did call;
The God incarnate, Man divine; | And crown Him Lord of all!

WEDNESDAY.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

– *Matthew 23:37-39.*

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by preaching and working miracles, had done so much for the people of Jerusalem in order to reveal Himself to them; but He had always been rejected. On this last Tuesday, in the temple, the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people had continually harassed and tempted Him. They even held counsel how to kill Him. So now, in presence of all the people, powerfully and repeatedly, Jesus cried woe upon these murderous hypocrites.

At last He said: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

And then He pronounced upon whole Jerusalem, encrusted in unbelief, self-righteousness, and carnal-mindedness, the stirring as well as portentous words written above. Yea, He often would have gathered Jerusalem, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but they would not. As Jerusalem had always been a murderess of prophets, so even now it brooded murder against Him and His witnesses. Therefore an end must be made of Jerusalem and of the temple and of the service and of the people. And Him, the Savior, they were not to see henceforth, not until they shall see and hear Him on Judgment Day, when, with gnashing of their teeth, they shall be constrained to confess that it is He to whom they must say: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23.)

O you people, that call yourself a Christian people, even today, how recreant are you and full of hatred toward Christ! How does your Savior seek to gather even you with fervent desire, but you would not! What dreadful doom will finally come over you! Christians, Christians, let us accept the Savior!

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I thank You that – through Your Gospel – You have taken me under Your saving wings and to this point have kept me there! Govern me, I implore You, by Your Holy Spirit, lest, after all, I reject such grace. Grant that I may appreciate the same ever more, and accept it ever more thankfully, gladly hearing and learning Your precious Word, living according to it, and being governed by it, to the end that now I may know You to be my gracious Savior, and when You shall come again, that then I may enter the eternal mansions with You. Amen.

Hymn 33, 8.

Lord Jesus, who dost love me,
O spread Thy wings above me,
And shield me from alarm!
Though Satan would devour me;
Let angel-guards sing o'er me:
"This child of God shall meet no harm!"

THURSDAY.

While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. – John 12:36.

Today let us hear the last words Jesus spoke before the people in public, and in which He testified that He was the Savior. This was on the same Tuesday in the temple.

Thinking of His suffering and death, which was to come to pass so soon, He said: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." After Christ's atoning death this is the judgment of this world, that Satan, the prince of this world, is cast out no longer to accuse us, and that all may find righteousness and salvation with Jesus, who was lifted up on the cross. – "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." Jesus is the light. He shineth upon us through His Word. We must believe in Him before it is too late.

– And He cried and said: "He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believeth not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have

spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent Me, He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father spake unto Me, so I speak."

Jesus was not, as the Jews imagined, a prophet set up by Himself: no, the Father had sent Him. He spoke God's Word, the Word of grace, even as He performed God's work, the work of grace, for the salvation of the world. He, the Savior and Redeemer, will not judge any man. But if a man does not believe His Word, then this Word of divine grace which he rejected will, on Judgment Day, bear witness to his unbelief, which will condemn him. These were the last words Jesus addressed to His people. How inviting they were! But the masses were hardened. And now Jesus turned away from this people. (John 12:31-50)

Oh, while you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be a child of the light!

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, within me and about me there is nothing but darkness. You alone are Light and Salvation. You give light for me through Your Word. Your Word is God's Word. Grant that through this, Your Word, I may believe in You, lay hold on You as my only Savior, and through You enter eternal bliss. Amen.

Hymn 34, 1. 3. 5.

CHRIST, everlasting Source of light,
All things are open to Thy sight;
Thou Splendor of Thy Father's face,
Show us the path of truth and grace.

Remove our sinful drowsiness;
Let Satan not our soul oppress;
Our feeble flesh keep chaste and pure,
And let us rest in Thee secure.

Great Guardian of Thy Christian flock,
Thy presence be our saving rock;

Thine agony and holy blood
He always our support, O God!

FRIDAY.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. – Matthew 25:13.

On Tuesday evening, after He had been beset by His enemies all day long, Jesus sat with His disciples on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem. And there He spoke with them at great length about His coming again to Judgment. And this was the burden of all His discourse: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

This is meant for us, too, as we also are His disciples. We must do as the virgins did, the companions of the bride, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom, –not like the foolish virgins, who took their lamps, but took no oil with them. Not only the name, not only the outward demeanor of Christians must be found with us, we must not merely profess allegiance to Christ and to His Church, no, our hearts must be filled with faith, with faith in the Savior, with faith which makes us the Savior's own, with faith which the Holy Ghost through the Word gives, increases, strengthens, and sustains. True, it may be that we become drowsy when the bridegroom delays to come, for our heart, which holds faith's treasure, is but an earthen vessel. And yet, if only faith is there – when the cry is made, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" – our faith will not be surprised, but it will be aroused, and brightly will its light shine, and gladly will it hail the Savior; and we shall go in with Him to the heavenly marriage-feast. But he who has no faith, his light will then go out, and the door will be shut for him forever. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Keeper of my soul, so govern me through Your Word and Your Holy Spirit, that the oil of

true faith in You be ever found in the frail vessel of my heart, and that I may be ever watchful and wakeful, in order that I may neither fear nor faint when You, O heavenly Bridegroom, come – but together with You, may joyfully enter the marriage-feast of eternal life, and by Your grace obtain eternal salvation. Amen.

Hymn 134, 1.

The Bridegroom soon will call us: | Come, all ye wedding guests!
May not His voice appall us | While slumber binds our breasts!
May all our lamps be burning, | And oil be found in store,
That we with Him returning, | May open find the door!

SATURDAY.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified. – Matthew 21:42.

Tuesday's sun was setting, and, according to Jewish reckoning, Wednesday began. And Jesus arose from the place on Olivet where He sat with His disciples, and went with them to Bethany. And there, as they went, He said to them: "Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified."

Christian, this is the faith which always must be within your heart: Christ is crucified; Christ is crucified for *me*; Christ is crucified to atone for my sin; Christ is crucified to reconcile me unto God, to make me righteous before God. In this faith you can not fear nor faint: not though the power of death overtake you; not when the last trumpet shall resound; not when heaven and earth shall pass away; not when the Judge of all the earth, appearing in dreadful splendor, shall assemble all the nations before Him. This faith holds out always and against everything. This is the one true Christian faith. There is

no other. There has never been any other, there never will be any other. Keep this faith. Deep within your heart let the name and *cross* of Christ glow ever and always. Not with hands merely, but through the Holy Ghost, in faith, make the sign of Christ's cross, as it were, upon yourself. This will keep you eternally.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, write, draw, engrave, Your cross, whereby I am saved, deep within my inmost heart. Do it, O Lord, through Your Gospel and through Your Holy Spirit, who works effectually upon sinful hearts through the Gospel. Through Your cross You have overcome all things that can terrify me. Grant that through faith in Your cross I may overcome all adversity, and whatever causes me to take fright, and enter heaven. Amen.

Hymn 532, 3.

When all around is darkling,
Thy name and cross, still bright,
Deep in my heart are sparkling
Like stars in blackest night.
Appear Thou in Thy sorrow,
For Thine was woe indeed,
And from Thy cross I borrow
All comfort heart can need.

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Note:

Sexagesima is the second Sunday before Lent. The word means sixtieth, denoting some sixty days before Easter.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
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