**March 17th 2024 Judica Sunday**

**Text: John 8:39-45** 0711

**Theme: Two Kinds of Children.**

May the Lord God ever give us grace that we never do despite unto His Spirit but be and live as children of our Father in heaven. Amen. Dear children of God: The apostle James, said, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” (Jms. 3:13-18)* The apostle James makes some concise and clear statements here. He is speaking of fruits, meaning the natural results of that which is sown in the heart. Who among us would deny that our old man, the sinful flesh that still resides within us, is entirely put away? Not one who clings to the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. For that reason not one of us can look at the words of James, and not see in themselves the fruit of wickedness and the fruit of righteousness proceeding forth from them. What then are we to make of his words here? Are we to assume that we are in unbelief because some wicked fruits still come forth from us? Nay, but rather we are to understand which deeds are from our own flesh and which proceed from faith, and diligently seek to be rid of those wicked fruits. We, dear Christians, are those that are endowed with knowledge from above, having received the wisdom of God through faith. Now we are children of our Father in heaven, but does that then mean that we live day by day as we see fit, knowing that God has mercy upon us? Are we to be as the world all the while claiming to be something set apart, a special people, children of God? Obviously we cannot. James is here showing that a Christian will diligently and prayerfully seek to be rid of sin and shame in his life; he will ask the Spirit to purify him, to put down the old man, and cause a new man to come forth and arise. James shows to us clearly what works are from the flesh and not from faith. Envying and strife do not proceed from our faith, but our flesh. Strife amongst Christians is not pure, but is the result of envy, bitterness and is devilish. If we find ourselves striving with one another, speaking of things neither commanded nor forbidden by God, we are following our flesh, and are producing evil, wicked fruits of the flesh.

Our little congregation is growing up, dear Christians, and as it does there are more and more petty things which can drive a wedge between us. There are differing opinions on a multitude of subjects, and they are only personal preference. James then shows what works proceed from faith. He says that the fruit of faith is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated. Each of these proceed from the heart of faith and make for peace within a family and a Christian family. The most noteworthy of these is that Christians are to be easily intreated, meaning that we are not given to making demands of one another which have not been commanded. That we seek to be at peace with one another, rather than striving amongst ourselves. Faith looks to another’s welfare more than our own, and any strife is easily put away by Christians who have a sacrificial spirit toward one another, but strife grows when Christians seek to please only themselves, and make unjust and legalistic demands of one another. We should not strive amongst ourselves, but love one another as Jesus Christ has commanded us according to the faith that dwells within our hearts. *“A soft answer turneth away wrath,; but grievous words stir up anger.” (Prov. 15:1)* James also mentions that Christians are full of mercy; and what is mercy? Not giving what is deserved. Now one of your brethren may have injured you in one way or another, but as God has had mercy upon us, so too we should have mercy upon one another, and release our brethren from their debt to us. With these things in mind we turn to our text for today, and building on our the words of James we will see two kinds of children from the words of our dear Savior. Our text is found in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at verse thirty nine.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord God almighty, Thou who art our Father, and we Thy children, give unto us Thy Holy Spirit in great measure, that we do not lie against the truth, nor fall from faith and so become children of the devil. Help us to put away the filth of our own flesh, which seeks to overthrow truth with lies, and moves us to put away our faith. Guide us, O Lord, in the way that we should go, and cause fruit to flow forth from us. Helo us to be pure, peaceable, easy to be intreated, full of mercy, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Help us to examine ourselves in sincerity and truth, to recognize our own weaknesses, to acknowledge our own sin, and to sorrow over that sin. Move us to come before Thee and confess our unworthiness, not feigning righteousness, but humbly submitting to Thy perfect Law, and in true repentance receive the forgiveness of all our sins and the salvation of our souls. Then, being Thy children, lead us to live as becometh a Christian, loving our brothers and sisters, and living at peace with them all our days, , bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold. Grant these things, O Most glorious God in heaven above, for the sake of Thy Son’s eternal sacrifice, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of two kinds of children, taught to us by Christ, seeing first the:

1. **Children of the devil.** We read verses forty one through forty five of our text: **read verses here.** Our text picks up in the middle of a conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees, who are here challenging Jesus’ claim of divinity, of being the Son of God. Through the course of the exchange Jesus declares that through Him they would be made free, and this is where our text picks up and the Pharisees declare their heritage, their bloodline traced back to Abraham himself. Yet Jesus declares plainly and without reservation that their true father is the devil, not Abraham and certainly not God, and Jesus proves this by their fruits. The fruit the Pharisees brought forth was of envy, murder, hatred, strife, and lies. They hated the truth that Jesus was the Savior because He was not the Savior that they wanted or even expected. They were blind; they were deaf to the truth and this because of the hardness of their hearts. We hear in speaking to many of these same men: *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised is heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51)* Now Jesus is not showing unto us that the weakness of our flesh or our sins of weakness are unbelief; but He is showing that the unbelief that resides in the hearts of the Pharisees is exactly where our flesh is attempting to lead us. We are pushed, pulled, and prodded by our own flesh to hate our brothers, to be envious of our sisters, to seek harm to them, to hold grudges against them, and speak great evil words against them. The flesh of the Pharisees got the better of them, and though they knew the Word of God well, did not truly know it all. They could recite whole chapters and books, they could portray it all in vivid detail, but the truth of Scripture was hidden from them because of their own sinful flesh. They refused the offer of grace from the Holy Spirit and therefore hardened their hearts.

The summary of the commandments is easily shown by Luther in his Small Catechism, saying that the first table of the Law is Love toward God, and the second table love toward our neighbor. Now if a Christian is commanded to love his neighbor, does that include his brother in Christ? And lest we think that the grace of God covers us we are delivered to do whatsoever we will, hear this: *“behold ye trust in lying words, which cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.” (Jer. 7:8-11)* The Christian, though made free from the guilt of the Law, is by no means made free to do whatsoever he desires, but sin is sin. We still must acknowledge that even as Christians we sin still and greatly sorrow over each sin. But if one sins and feels justified in sinning because of some action of another person, by that fruit is showing that faith is lacking and the evidence of that is evil and wicked works. Dear Christians, we are in grave danger, at all times, of apostasy from the faith because of our flesh. And truly the less danger we think we are in, the more danger we are actually in. Paul said: *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12)* I want each of us right now to think only of your own actions. Do not apply this sermon to other people, but apply it to yourself. Examine yourself and repent. You will surely find that you have sinned and deserve only wrath and condemnation. And know that you are forgiven for the sake of Jesus blood through faith. Put away from yourselves then those things which displease God, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Thus we have seen the children of the devil and the spirit of our flesh which desires to be children of Satan. Let us now see secondly the:

1. **Children of the Lord.** We read verses thirty nine and forty of our text: **read verses here.** We want to take careful note of Jesus’ words here. Jesus is pointing to fruits as evidence of who a person’s father truly is. The Pharisees make the claim that Abraham is their father, and later that God is their Father, but the fruit of what is inside their heart is clearly shown, and the opposite is also true. If we are of the faith of Abraham, then our works will be as the works or fruit of Abraham. And what is often shown is the fruit of Abraham? Nothing else than obedience! Now Abraham was not perfect; he was not sinless, but His faith was evident in the obedience He wrought to God out of thankfulness for the promise of forgiveness and salvation through the Savior who was to come. Paul says this: *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; nether is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit.” (Rom. 2:28-29)* Now what Paul says concerning the Jewish faith is also true of Christianity, for truly they are one and same at least as both were originally given. He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, for true faith is not outward affiliation, but inward regeneration, which will be shown by fruits. Those who are of the faith of Abraham, which we are, will love the truth, and will desire more than anything to live as a Christian should live.

To each and every one of us Jesus is saying these words, for while much of what He says s spoken to the Pharisees, it is spoken also to our own sinful flesh. However, Jesus also speaks to our faith, He speaks to us as His brothers and sisters, as children of our Father in heaven. Let us not put away this grace from ourselves through impenitent sin, nor of being found sleeping as the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, but by His grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit let us put away the works of the flesh which are manifest, and let us put on the armor of light which fights against temptation to sin and the continual prompting of our flesh to put away our faith. Let us live peaceably with one another, let us love one another fervently and sincerely. Let us provoke one another unto love and good works. Our Lord here speaks to us, do not let it pass by without taking it to heart and learning therefrom. The devil desires to have us, as Jesus said to Peter, that he might sift us as wheat and throw away all that is good and righteous, that is, remove faith from our hearts. Let us thank the Lord for one another, for we family through the blood and faith of our Savior Jesus Christ. May we ever thank and praise Him for all these gracious blessings unto us. Amen.