**June 30th 2018 Fifth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Luke 7:36-50** 0727

**Theme: For Whom did Christ Come?**

May our God and Savior, who came to earth and died for us, give all of you peace and joy in His forgiveness of sins and salvation. Amen. Dear justified Christians: We live in the last times, dear Christians, and in so doing we should never lose sight of that which is truly important. At times it may seem as if we tire of hearing the same sermons concerning sin and salvation. Yet we know according to faith that the truth of the Gospel is far and away the highest of all things, and the defense of that truth is of utmost importance for the sake of our own faith and that of our children and grandchildren, we hear: *“I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.” (Rev. 2:2-3)* The words spoken here are from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, sending letters unto the churches of Asia via the pen of the apostle John. In the letter to the Ephesians the Lord commends the work and patience of this congregation in not tolerating false doctrine in their midst, but ridding themselves of it, and they labored abundantly for the name of Jesus. Truly they should be commended for their labor in the church and for their patient continuance even when things seemed impossible.

Yet, there was a danger for the congregation in Ephesus unto whom John wrote, for they had endured a great battle. They had engaged in a long fight and were weary, worn, battered and bruised, and because of it they had begun to forget that for which they fought. The danger to their own faith had become very real, for they had begun to see themselves as the reason for their own justification, that they had fought a good warfare and they were owed something by God, or so they thought. They had began to think that their work of love, was anything but a work of love, but rather a work of merit, a work of reward. They had left their first love as is written later in the letter. In the same way our own flesh pushes us to think and act in this manner, it is full of pride and conceit, looking for any opportunity to magnify and glorify itself even in those things we have done in the name of the Lord. And thus today we must remember what has been done in our behalf by our Lord Jesus Christ, remember the battle that was fought and the reason we engaged therein. We need to remember that we are nothing and Christ is everything. More than anything, though, we need to remember the words of Christ: *“When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10)* We must remember our justification, and what we are without the mercy and grace of God. We must remember for whom Christ came, and upon remembering these things our flesh is put into check and our faith once again rejoices in our Savior Christ Jesus and we give glory to God for all that **HE** has done. Today we will answer the question: for whom did Christ come? We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the seventh chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse thirty six.

**Quote text here.**

Dearest Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we implore Thee to have mercy upon us poor miserable sinners, blot out all our transgressions. Wash us throughly from all our iniquity, for against Thee have we sinned and deserved only Thy wrath and punishment. Thou desirest that we know the truth of our own corruption, and acknowledge and repent of our sins committed in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we heartily confess them unto Thee, and beg Thy grace in washing us and making us whiter than snow. Make us to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Do not cast us away from thy presence and restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation. Teach us that the devil, the world, and our own flesh desire to make us proud and conceited in ourselves, and we ask that Thou wouldst put down all pride, guard us against their devices and uphold us in the faith, that we may forever be those for whom Thou didst come, and might be justified in Thy presence and saved eternally. O Savior, grant us salvation in Thy name, and humility all our lives through. Grant these things for Thy own sake. Amen.

Dearest Christians, let us hear the teaching of our Savior, answering the question: for whom did Christ come? Did He come for:

1. **The righteous?** We read verses thirty six through forty three of our text: **Read verses here.** It is indeed true that Christ came and died for all people, that is undisputed, and is a necessary teaching for faith, and the Biblical teaching of objective justification. Without this teaching faith has no solid ground on which to stand, for one cannot believe that Jesus came to die for him unless it is true that Christ came for all. Thus Christ did come to die for the sins of the whole world, but in another sense He came for only some. Did He come for the righteous? You see, in the end the work which Christ performed for the entire race of mankind only benefits those who receive it through faith, this is subjective justification. And in that sense Christ came for only those who actually believe. When we hear this we may immediately think that He did indeed come for the righteous, that is, those who are not as evil and wicked. But we must remember that we speak now of man as he is before justification. Our Savior once said: *“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:31-32)* Our Lord here shows that the righteous of whom we speak are those that believe themselves to be righteous. Our Savior does not call them to repentance, for they think they have nothing to repent of. When that is the case Christ cannot perform His natural work of preaching the Gospel unto poor sinners, but must engage in His foreign work of preaching law unto them. This is the very thing that He does in our text. Simon, the Pharisee had invited Jesus to dinner, and in his mind believed he was doing Jesus a favor, that they were to engage in a meeting of the minds so to speak. Two righteous men showing how righteous they were by dining and keeping company with only other righteous and well respected men. But during dinner, an event takes place which is entirely out of the norm for that time. A woman enters Simon’s house, which in and of itself is against custom, but even worse was who this woman was. Our text calls her a sinner, making a special point of doing so, and shows that she was a known sinner, notorious for her sinful life, and Simon is taken aback by the gall of this sinful woman. How dare she come into my home! How dare she defile my house by her uncleanness! How dare she, a notorious sinner, interrupt a meeting of the righteous! These were the thoughts of Simon, and as he watched her, she went to Jesus and began washing His feet and wiping them with her hair, she anointed him. Simon kept expecting Jesus to rebuke her, to put her in her place, to remind her that she was not worthy to be in their presence, and He did no such thing. Simon now has a different view of Jesus than he previously did. If He were really a prophet, a righteous man, He would rebuke her, for she is touching Him and making Him unclean, for she is an ugly and egregious sinner! And such is the flesh. How many times have we done the same when we see newcomers or visitors. In our minds we rebuke them for their clothing, we condemn them for their outward appearance, we deem them unworthy of us because of their sinful lifestyle. Yet when we do these things I would imagine that Jesus would have harsh things to say to us, like what He says to Simon.

Jesus tells Simon a parable of two men who owed money to a debtor. One owed a large amount, while the other owed a small amount. Neither could pay their debt and out of mercy he forgave them both of their debt. And He asks Simon to judge which would be more thankful. And rightly Simon judges that he which was forgiven the greater debt. Those who believe they have no debt to be forgiven will not love, nor believe in Him who forgave them, because they do not need mercy, grace, justification. They will not love Him, for they have only love for themselves, and their own righteousness. This is evident in Simon’s manner toward Jesus. He did not wash Jesus’ feet, he did not greet Him with a kiss, which was custom in those days for anyone who was higher in rank, and He did not anoint Jesus’ head with oil. He performed no acts of service toward Jesus, because he viewed Jesus either as an equal, or as inferior to himself, and needed not to stoop to such levels. He did not see Jesus as his God and Savior, but rather as a famous guest which would boost his own popularity and fame. This is the danger that is posed when we begin to forget the work of Christ and focus on our own works, our own battles, our own labor. They begin to make us cold toward the Gospel and we become in need of rebuke of the sort which Simon received. Jesus was teaching Simon that he was not better than this woman, but rather, as He said in another place: *“verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” (Matt. 21:31)* And this brings us to our second question, continuing the question of whom Christ came for; did He come for:

1. **The sinners?** We read verses forty four through fifty of our text: **read verses here.** We have recently studied the Scripture text of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing His words, learning of Him, while Martha cumbered herself with much serving. Interestingly, in the Gospel of John we hear: *“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)” (John 11:1)* This little side-note in the narration of John drops on us like a ton of bricks. The same woman who sat at Jesus’ feet and willingly and gladly heard His Word, who had her brother raised from the dead, who personally knew the Lord and was friends with Him, is the same woman who comes to Him here in our text. Likely this is the moment when Mary met Jesus for the first time, here in the midst of her guilt and suffering, in the brokenness of her soul, she finds Him who becomes her All in all. We saw earlier that Mary was a notable sinner. Notorious for her sinful life, and this would seem to indicate that she was a harlot, a whore, known to be so, an adulteress! She was well known for her life, for her sin, as shown by Simon’s reaction. Why does she come to Jesus in the manner that she did? Was she attempting to save herself by these acts of service? No, she came in humility, in deep guilt, in anguish over the sin for which she was known. Something had begun to work in her heart, she had not come to this realization herself, but the Holy Spirit had moved her to repentance in some way. No indication is given in Scripture as to what earthly events might have taken place to cause this reaction by Mary, but it is evident that it was not of her own accord, for man cannot turn to God of himself, but must be brought to repentance by God. We hear: *“Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented.” (Jer. 31:18-19)* It must be that God turn our heart away from sin and pride to repentance, humility and faith. And thus she comes, as a harlot, a whore, a home-wrecker, she comes just as she is, with nothing to offer, and with tears begs for mercy and pardon from her sin. And the most amazing thing of all, Jesus does not condemn her, He does make her do penance, but freely forgives her great debt. She receives the comfort which her heart and soul desperately needed, she receives the forgiveness of her many sins. All those wicked things that she had done were forgiven her by her Lord and Savior, she was justified, she was saved. This further explains the reason she wanted to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of His teaching, to hear His Word. What else would she want to hear other than to be reminded again and again that though she is condemned by the world and her own conscience, though the devil assails her daily with guilt, she is nonetheless saved by the blood of her Savior and the gift of faith within her. The psalmist David once said, probably thinking of his own large debt: *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (Ps. 32:1-6)* And therefore, dear Christians, let us always remember what we were, we were this woman, our sins are no less damnable than hers, and though we may not have been an harlot, a notable sinner, we are corrupted sinners nonetheless, and our Savior has said to us, as He did to her, thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace. Let us remember this today, and understand that this is the very reason we continue fighting, it is the reason we have assembled together for the past many years, and the reason we will continue to do so, by God’s grace. May this be so unto us, and may God continue to shed His grace upon us through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.