

## ***“All Authority”***

How about a show of hands of those who would like to go back to January 1<sup>st</sup> and start 2020 all over again? I didn't think there would be any takers. It's been quite a year already, hasn't it?

The best way I can describe it is – chaos. Everything is turned upside down. And it's affected us all. Our lives are full of fear, anxiety, frustration, anger and rage.

A virus that spawns sickness, isolation, and death – businesses shuttered, wages lost – and people restricted in their vocations of service to others. Racism, anarchy, looting and violence – communities torn apart – people taking advantage of the chaos for their own selfish, and sinful purposes.

This is a picture of the Fall in miniature – a snapshot of what the sin of mankind has done to God's “very good” creation. But let's be clear – all of this is not just the result of Adam's sin – this is what OUR sin has brought about. This is the result of man rebelling against God – despising Him, and His gifts.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me,” Jesus says. ALL authority, over ALL things. Having shown His authority over sin and death by His resurrection on the third day, Jesus ascends into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father almighty – to the position of all authority – to rule and reign over all things.

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has not abandoned His creation, rejected it or cast it away – He is still present and active in His creation for our good. But this is a mystery. Our eyes and experience may tell us otherwise. So God reveals what He is doing through His Word – so that we, as His children, may live by faith in His Word.

In the beginning, God created all things by the power of His Word – and by His Word – He continues to sustain all things. The Word of God has the authority of God Himself – His Word does what He says.

In the Church, God exercises His authority over sin, death and the devil – by the Gospel. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

God is with you in Holy Baptism – releasing you from the bondage of Satan and his kingdom, in which he is hell-bent on destroying you and all the world. He washes you in the blood of Jesus Christ – by which your sin is accounted for – triumphing over your death with His resurrection.

Baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – you are now His disciple. God the Holy Spirit is with you to guide and lead you in all His ways – so that you may realize and receive with thanksgiving, all the gifts of body and soul that He bestows on you – so that you may follow Him through this world to the life everlasting.

And yet, the three great enemies – the devil, the world, and your own sinful nature – continue their rebellious ways. They tempt you in order to lead you away from God and His Word – so that they may have dominion over you.

They mock the Word of God, as if it is only the word of foolish man – a fairy tale – unfit for life in this world. Holy Baptism is despised – touted on the one hand as merely a simple ceremony concocted by man – and on the other hand, held up as some kind of a lucky charm that it to be used by man only in times of desperation.

The truth is that Holy Baptism is the fulfillment of God’s promise to be with you always – redeeming you and saving you. And so that you might be sustained in this wearisome journey – He also gives you the very Body and Blood of the resurrected Christ – to nourish and strengthen you in the one true faith unto life everlasting.

Now remember, God is the Creator and sustainer of ALL things. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. God is not quarantined to the Church – He exercises authority over all things – including the civil realm.

Here too, God is present and active, for our good. He bestows His authority upon those He has given to govern – so that through their service – He might provide peace for all people. He commands the governing authorities to punish the evildoer, and to commend those who do good – for the safety, and productivity of all society.

So also in the realm of the family, the Lord Himself is present and active. His Word commands us to “Honor your father and mother” – for they stand in His place, exercising His authority, for the benefit of their children. Fathers especially are tasked with raising their children in the Christian faith – so that they may live, and die, trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Behind ALL of this – whether in the Church, the civil realm, or in the family – the Lord is fulfilling His promise to be “with you always, to the end of the age.” God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – exercising authority over all things – “for you.”

As we live in the midst of our present chaos, it is so tempting to look around and blame others for all the evils in the world. The truth is that we have a problem with authority. We chafe and rebel against the authority that God has placed over us – and when He puts us in a position to exercise His authority – we abuse it. We use it for our benefit, rather than those God has given us to serve.

Dearly beloved, let us repent of our rebellious ways – and turn to the Lord who is gracious and merciful – who has loved us from the beginning – who sustains us in good times and in bad – and who promises to be with us always, to the end of the age.

Even now, listen to the Word of the Lord – for, “In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Did you hear that? God has not forsaken you – He has forgiven all your sins. He is faithful, and you are His beloved children. Let us live with Him, taking refuge in His mercy, and following Him by faith, all the days of our lives. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.