

## ***“The Discipline of the Lord”***

Do you – “Fear the Lord, you His saints” – as you sang in the Gradual today? As the First Commandment teaches us, we are to “fear, love and trust in God above all things.” But so often when the saints speak of this “fear” – they seem to shy away from the full force of this word.

Yes, to “fear the Lord” is to have a proper reverence for Him – but it’s more than that. As Luther writes in the Close of the Commandments – “we should fear His wrath and not do anything against [these commandment].”

Let me ask the question in another way – using the language from our Gospel reading. Do you fear (and believe) that “the door is narrow” – that the door to salvation, to the kingdom of God – is narrow, and that many will not be able to enter in?

The knee-jerk reaction is to say YES – I believe that. But do you apply this to others – that many OTHER PEOPLE will not be able to enter in? “It applies to them, but not to me.”

Do you ever fear that you will not be able to enter in? Or are you like those in our text who “begin to say, ‘We ate and drank n your presence, and you taught in our streets.’” It is to them that “the master of the house” says – “I do not know where you come from” – and, “Depart from me, all your workers of evil!”

Dear saints of the Lord – you confessed once again today that you have sinned against God – but the writer to the Hebrews says – “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” What I fear, is that we don’t often struggle with our sin (I know this from personal experience).

The writer goes on to say: “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives.”

Our heavenly Father, in love for us, disciplines us – but have we “regarded lightly the discipline of the Lord”? To regard it lightly, to reject the discipline of the Lord – is to reject Him as your Father – and then you are no longer His son. Which brings us back to that narrow door – and those haunting words – “I don’t know where you come from.”

So what is this discipline of the Lord? It begins with the discipline of His Law. So that no one “fails to obtain the grace of God” – He disciplines His children with His Law. Jesus, who has “taught in our streets” has taught us the Ten Commandments – but do we regard them lightly?

So that you might be saved, He desires that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble – so that we might not become defiled. But do you struggle “against” bitterness – or do you delight in it? Do you orient your whole life towards certain people with bitterness? They have harmed you in some way – and so you use it as an excuse to hate them, to be angry with them, to withhold grace from them?

Do you struggle against “sexual immorality” – or do you easily give in – telling yourself that God will forgive you? This is regarding your sin lightly – denying God’s wrath at your sin.

Are you like Esau “who sold his birthright for a single meal”? You remember Esau, who came in from the field, famished – and nonchalantly gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew. Do you so easily set aside the Lord and His Word, for whatever you desire at the moment?

“Sure, you taught us Lord – we’ve learned the Ten Commandments” – but do they discipline – leading you to struggle against temptations and sin – or, do you regard His discipline lightly?

Dear saints, the Law’s discipline not only trains you in holy living – but ultimately – it declares that you are not worthy to enter through the narrow door into the kingdom of God. It should stoke fear in your hearts – the fear of God’s wrath that you deserve – and in so doing, prepare you for the Gospel – the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel – God’s undeserved love for you in Christ Jesus – is also a discipline. With the Gospel, the Lord is teaching you to use Jesus rightly – to use Jesus against your sin.

“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” – but Jesus has. Jesus has taken all your sin as if it were His very own. He takes your place under the wrath of God – receiving the punishment and penalty that sin deserves. He has endured the suffering for your sin.

In Christ, you see that sin is not a nothing. The wrath of God is real. Sin is deadly – and Jesus has suffered all things, including death, “for you.”

Dearly beloved, “the Lord disciplines the one He loves.” He disciplines you to see sin for what it is – that which separates you from God. So do not regard the Lord’s discipline lightly – see it for what it is – His love for you.

“In your struggle against sin” – “Fear the Lord ... for those who fear Him lack nothing.” Indeed, you lack nothing – for the Lord disciplines you with His Law and His Gospel. His Law shows you that sin is not harmless, a nothing – and His Gospel shows you that Jesus has not suffering for nothing – but for you.

Receive His Body and Blood to strengthen you against the attacks of the evil one – and live in His Absolution – for when Jesus forgives you all your sin, He sets you free. Rather than casting you away – He gathers you to Himself – for He is the narrow door by which you enter the kingdom of God.

So enter in – to feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets – with people from east and west, north and south – reclining with Jesus as His Table – as the beloved child of God – for that is who you are, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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