

1 Peter 1:17-25

Our Epistle lesson starts with law. A conditional statement is made: “If you call on the Father...” And I suppose we can stop there to see if we should continue reading or not. Do you call on the Father? Is there a God? And do you think it is possible to call upon him?

Judging by the fact you are in a Church this morning, I am going to assume that answer for most of us is: yes. And if not, lets talk. We just went over the proofs for the existence of God and the resurrection not long ago.

But most of us are saying Yes, we call on the Father.

Well then Peter is quick to note the Father judges impartially according to one's deeds before getting to his point: If you call on the impartial Father, conduct yourselves with fear throughout your sojourning down here.

So: If you call on the Father... should your life, behavior, speech, and thought, be indistinguishable from those who don't call on the Father? And if it is indistinguishable, perhaps we ought reflect on that. The world plays favorites. “I like this political party and definitely not anyone from that side of the aisle. I like these people, not them. I want good things for them, bad for them. I get mad when this happens, because that's clearly not fair. And I deserve this and not that.” And the darkness and depression seep in because we are only focused on our bellies and

pocketbooks, and not the things eternal. And on and on the world goes and grudges get deeper and deeper, and the unhealthy habits go on, because we distract ourselves, or say “we are too busy to deal with it right now.” And we go right along with it.

And Peter says, “Hello! Wake up! You have a heavenly Father!” And again, a bit of law here, he judges impartially, which means, he’s not going to play favorites like we do. No he’ll judge you too. And how are you going to stand before that judgment on your own?

Thank Goodness Peter doesn’t stop there, does he?

He goes onto say that you who call on the Father also have His Son. His Son, our Savior, who “ransomed you from these futile ways of the world!” And folks, that is wonderful Gospel. Good news.

That is how we stand in the judgment. Not with the gold or silver, not with the fame, not with the looks, not with “well I did my best and did better than others!” No! Stop playing the dumb games of the world! You stand in the judgment with the blood of Christ. Priceless. Pure. Shed. For you.

You will stand in the judgment. Your evil deeds are gone. Washed away. Never to be seen or heard of again. Do we realize how freeing that is!? And, here’s the best part: it’s true!

So you have “purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...” The truth that you are saved in Jesus which means we can now live not under judgment but love. And love that we are called to, but are privileged to as well, share. “Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”

And when we fail remember, that particular call to love is not the prerequisite for the blood of Jesus but comes after it. The blood of Jesus is shed, however well or purely you pull off “loving earnestly from a pure heart.” God certainly loves you with all his heart, enough to send His own Son who lovingly pours out it all to ransom you back. His love is there. May ours grow from it.

But this is easter and the Gospel does not end here, with love. It ends with resurrection – which means it ends in a love that will be eternal.

Peter notes that we have been born of imperishable seed. Actually I misspoke: we are most certainly born of perishable seed, the evidence of that is in every cemetery or hospital around. All of fallen mankind dies. He says we were born again* (or from above) of imperishable seed. To be in Christ, to call upon the Father, that is done by those who will not die. Not eternally, that’s for sure.

So how is one born again? A man named Nicodemus might ask. Good question.

Jesus’ answer, in John 3: “to be born of water and Spirit.” And we know where those meet: at the baptismal font. Peter says the same in our First Reading, “Repent

and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” You call upon the Father? You have been baptized in Jesus’ name? You are of imperishable stock!

And I already hear the questions, “what of those who aren’t baptized!?” And so on. First of all, come to a Bible class – that is a perfect time to work through all of that. Secondly, we of course understand that God works through various means to create saving faith and to give people new birth. And we always acknowledge the Word of God (Romans 10) is one of those means. You do not HAVE to HAVE to Have to be baptized to be saved. But why should we be stingy with God’s gifts? And since when do we only want the bare minimum? You want to express your love for your spouse, just as barely enough as you need to? So why not receive the fulness of God’s love for you in the gift of water and Word?

And, in case you doubt, Peter goes on to speak of the Word that has come to we who have been born again. He goes through an adventurous route, however. Through the route of our own fallenness and impermanence. He quotes Isaiah, noting how we are like grass. Here for a while then gone. Faded. Dead. Forgotten. But, so beautifully, we and our deaths contrast with the Word of God which will always live on.

And we might think, that's nice for the Word of God and all, but I'd sure like to live on! True enough. And that is exactly Peter's point. "And this word is the good news that was preached to you." The Word has come to you, no? The eternal word has come to you, it has this very day! It is yours, a part of you, you who call on the Father? You who believe in Jesus' resurrection, you baptized in his name? How can you not live on? How could you even dream that you would be forgotten by God? How could you even imagine your sins would keep you from him?

You, through Jesus' blood and his victorious resurrection, belong to God. So you, when you call on the Father, guess what, he hears! And he listens, and he knows you, your voice, your cares, your pains, your fears, the very hairs on your head however few or many. And yes, you will fade and die. Just as our Lord did. But he is Risen! And you are One with Him, how could we even imagine we will not share in his resurrection victory?

So, fellow sojourners here. We are not immune to the rat race and anger and grudges, we so often fail to love earnestly with a pure heart. But may the grace of God begin to work in us, change our hearts of stone, and make room for joy, for forgiveness, for reasonableness, for gentleness, for peace. Until that day, and it will come, when he makes our hearts anew and everlasting.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.