

Friday June 12, 2020

Opening

Selected verses from Psalm 115

Leader: Not to us, O LORD, not to us,

***Family:* But to your name give glory,**

Because of your mercy,

Because of your truth.

The heavens are heavens for the LORD,

But the earth he gave to the children of Adam.

It is not the dead who praise the LORD,

Nor any of those who go down to silence,

But we are the ones who bless the LORD,

From now to eternity. Praise the LORD. Alleluia!

Bible Reading - Acts 7:1-60

Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?"

² To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran.

³ 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'

⁴ "So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. ⁵ He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. ⁶ God spoke to him in this way: 'For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated. ⁷ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' ⁸ Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹ "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰ and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

¹¹ "Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. ¹² When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. ¹³ On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. ¹⁴ After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. ¹⁵ Then Jacob went down to

Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. ¹⁶ Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

¹⁷ “As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. ¹⁸ Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ ¹⁹ He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

²⁰ “At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. ²¹ When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. ²² Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

²³ “When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. ²⁴ He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. ²⁶ The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’

²⁷ “But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? ²⁸ Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹ When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

³⁰ “After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. ³¹ When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: ³² ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

³³ “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴ I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.’

³⁵ “This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶ He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

³⁷ “This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’ ³⁸ He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.

³⁹ “But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. ⁴⁰ They told Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!’ ⁴¹ That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and reveled in what their own hands had made. ⁴² But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the sun, moon and stars. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets:

“ ‘Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings
forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?

⁴³ You have taken up the tabernacle of Molek
and the star of your god Rephan,
the idols you made to worship.

Therefore I will send you into exile’ beyond Babylon.

⁴⁴ “Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵ After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, ⁴⁶ who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

⁴⁸ “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

⁴⁹ “ ‘Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me?
says the Lord.

Or where will my resting place be?

⁵⁰ Has not my hand made all these things?’

⁵¹ “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Questions for Discussion

Take whatever time is necessary or possible to discuss these questions. Discussion does not have to be lengthy.

For the kids: *How did the Sanhedrin (the Jewish leaders) respond to Stephen’s speech?*

For the grownups: Stephen's speech is an excellent summary of Old Testament history. How does this summary condemn the Sanhedrin? How can this summary show your own weakness at times? Where can forgiveness be found?

Prayer

Luther's Morning Prayer:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

or

Luther's Evening Prayer:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

The head of the household may lead other prayers and petitions. The members of the family may also take turns with their own prayers and petitions. The head of the household closes the prayer in Jesus' name.

Blessing

Leader: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Amen.

Hymn

Read or sing the hymn verse as a family.

**Not unto us, not unto us be glory, Lord;
Not unto us but to your name be praise;
Not unto us but to your name all honor be giv'n
For matchless mercy, forgiveness, and grace.
(CW 392)**

A recording of this hymn can be found on [YouTube](#).

Large Catechism Study

Optional: Briefly discuss and apply this portion of Luther's Large Catechism.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (Continued)

Besides this you must also know how to use the name [of God] aright. For when saying: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain, He gives us to understand at the same time that it is to be used properly. For it has been revealed and given to us for the very purpose that it may be of constant use and profit. Hence it is a natural inference, since using the holy name for falsehood or wickedness is here forbidden, that we are, on the other hand, commanded to employ it for truth and for all good, as when one swears truly where there is need and it is demanded. So also when there is right teaching, and when the name is invoked in trouble or praised and thanked in prosperity, etc.; all of which is comprehended summarily and commanded in the passage Ps. 50:15: Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. For all this is bringing it into the service of truth, and using it in a blessed way, and thus His name is hallowed, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer.

Thus you have the sum of the entire commandment explained. And with this understanding the question with which many teachers have troubled themselves has been easily solved, to wit, why swearing is prohibited in the Gospel, Matt 5:24ff, James 5:12; Matt 5:33-37; 26:29; Acts 21:20-26, and yet Christ, St. Paul, and other saints often swore. The explanation is briefly this: We are not to swear in support of evil, that is, of falsehood, and where there is no need or use; but for the support of good and the advantage of our neighbor we should swear. For it is a truly good work, by which God is praised, truth and right are established, falsehood is refuted, peace is made among men, obedience is rendered, and quarrels are settled. For in this way God Himself interposes and separates between right and wrong, good and evil. If one part swears falsely, he has his sentence that he shall not escape punishment, and though it be deferred a long time, he shall not succeed; so that all that he may gain thereby will slip out of his hands, and he will never enjoy it; as I have seen in the case of many who perjured themselves in their marriage-vows, that they have never had a happy hour or a healthful day, and thus perished miserably in body, soul, and possessions.