

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

Finish the sentence for me, if you can: "Those who don't learn from history are _____ (doomed to repeat it)." How's about this: "There's nothing new _____ (under the sun)." History is good. History is a great teacher...if you're willing to learn from it. We're not going through anything that our forefathers haven't gone through before us. You mean to tell me that we're the ONLY ones to ever have to experience war or terror or economic uncertainty? We're the ONLY ones to ever have poor excuses for government leadership? We're the ONLY ones to ever have to experience persecution of faith? Please!

History is a great teacher. We could stand to learn a lot from our forefathers. When Martin Luther preached on the very same Gospel text we heard today—the text that tells of a very angry King who utterly destroys and lays waste all those who arrogantly reject His gracious invitation to His wedding feast—he mentioned how this was already glimpsed in the history of God's people. For example, Luther pointed to the Old Testament Jewish people—God's chosen Israel—who had repeatedly thumbed their noses at Him and chose to do their own thing. We have lots of biblical examples! In 722 BC, the wicked Assyrians sacked them, laid waste to them, and hauled them off into oblivion and bondage. You would think that this would scare straight the Israelite relatives to the South. It didn't. By 586 BC those impenitent and thick-necked fools are also hauled off into bondage, taken to Babylon. But...God didn't let them remain in that death and bondage. God was faithful. He made a promise. His Messiah would come from the line of Israel. Yes, He would come from the burnt-out stump of the family tree of Jesse, but He would still come. God is faithful to His Word and promise.

In 536 BC God uses a Persian (an Iranian) by the name of Cyrus to free His people and get them back to the land He had promised them. They return, and upon their return—surprise, surprise—they go right back to their old ways. But, faithful and patient God doesn't quit on them. He sends a faithful outsider—a faithful Jew who worked in the administration of Cyrus by the name of Nehemiah—back to lead the temple rebuild and the re-establishment of "Israel." The temple finally does get re-built, but the joy doesn't last. They go right back to doing what they had always done. By the time Jesus is on the scene, Israel has gone right back to the vomit of their own self-righteousness and greed and arrogant pride. "We're children of Abraham! We've never been enslaved to anyone! Who do you think you are, Jesus?!" Really? Your Lord Himself made very clear that such rebelliousness and unfaithful works-righteousness and unwillingness to repent and humble themselves would result in that same temple—the monumental pride of Jerusalem—being laid waste, not one stone left upon another. And in AD 70 your Lord's Word and promise came to fruition. God used pagan Rome to sack and destroy that which had become an idol to the false god of works-righteousness.

And all this is just looking at one little snapshot in the history of God's people. Ever since the day man took it upon himself to be God's equal, we children of Adam have been on a monotonous treadmill of sin and death, always thinking that things are somehow different with us, even though there's nothing new under the sun.

Now, I know that we don't like to think of God as an angry God who destroys and lays waste impenitent and arrogant unbelief. Well...let me re-phrase that. We don't like to think that we're the ones who are the "bad guys" in the parable. We hear this parable, and we

immediately like to cast ourselves as those lowly, undeserving ones who were out at the crossroads of life, and who've been brought in to the feast. We're the good guys. If destruction is going on in our lives; if there is a little bit of weeping and gnashing of teeth, it's only because we're collateral damage. We're innocent victims caught up in the swell as God reproves and rebukes "those sinners." My friends: Examine yourself. Examine your own history. An honest look from God's perspective will tell you that you are not a poor, innocent victim. You are guilty. You are the perpetrator. I am too, just like our forefathers before us.

My dear brothers and sisters of the King: I don't want you to fret or despair over your salvation. I can't stress this enough. By God's grace and working, you have been clothed in Christ's robe of righteousness. Yes, we are sinners who do often reject and despise His gracious invitations. There are plenty of times that we would never be accused of being a faithful, humble child of God. But...as God tells us again and again and again, He disciplines those whom He loves. The loving Father chastises and disciplines His children, not because He hates them, but because He loves them.

Now, does that mean that He doesn't get angry? Who here hasn't been angry at someone you love? That doesn't mean you stop loving them. "I've taught you better than this!" Do not be deceived: Your sins do make God angry. God doesn't just get a little sad or depressed when you sin. No! He's a loving Father who does get rightly and righteously angry. I know that may not fit the "kinder, gentler, Lifetime Channel" version of God you prefer to believe in, but this is the God of Scripture. This is the God of history. This is the same God who made a whip of cords and raised His righteous voice as He disciplined His rebellious and wayward children. This is the God and Father of all mankind, who doesn't want to see us go down the paths so many have

gone before. We, of all people, clothed in His righteousness and grace, should know better! We have a whole history of His Word to tell us and teach us and show us.

Yes, we are living in very tough and scary times right now. We are witnessing God's loving, righteous, disciplinary anger against sin and rebellion and apathy and self-serving greed and pride. What you see on TV and hear from those around you may give the impression that God is very angry with us and is punishing us and is out to destroy us. He disciplines and chastises and calls to repentance, but He does not punish sin on this side of eternity. All the punishment for all sin has already been poured out upon His only-begotten Son in that one moment in time; that one single moment when Christ could and did rightly call out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" All of God's anger against sin has already been put on Christ and put to death on His cross, once and for all.

My dear children: Rejoice! Give thanks unto the Lord, for we are those who feast with the King this very day...and it's only going to get better. This is the foretaste of the feast to come! Yes, we are rebellious children of Adam, but we're also—simultaneously—redeemed children of God. But...do not forget: All this is by His grace. It's His free and unmerited gift to us, and that includes the humble and repentant garment of faith that knows and acknowledges the Truth that we are unworthy sinners who deserve nothing but present and eternal punishment.

May you never forget this blessed history; this divine and gracious history that is your past, which is completely forgiven in Christ; your present, which is Christ's all-availing and all-covering righteousness given to you in His Word and His Sacraments, and your blessed and joyous future, that never-ending heavenly feast with your Bridegroom

"A lesson in history" Matthew 22:1-14 Trinity 20 2021

and King. May you be clothed and covered over in this righteousness and this peace, now and into all eternity.

AMEN