

In the Footsteps of Jesus

1Peter 2:21-25

The Third Sunday of Easter, April 15, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus Christ is the righteous One.

When they reviled Him, He did not revile them in return. When He suffered He did not threaten the people who were causing His suffering. He gave Himself over to the One who judges justly.

When Jesus was ridiculed and mocked, He did not ridicule and mock in return. He certainly would have been justified in doing so. He did not deserve the mocking that He received. At the very least He should have pointed out to them how their mocking was outside of the will of God. He could have made fun of them for their lack of understanding of the divine will. He could have made fun of them because of their blindness in not being able to perceive that He was God's Son and that by His sufferings He was saving them. But He did none of that. He did not revile in return.

When Jesus was flogged and crucified, He did not threaten. He certainly could have. He certainly would have been tempted to have done so. If you were being flogged and crucified, wouldn't you try to have some power and control over what was happening to you? If you were in a concentration camp, wouldn't you threaten the ones who were tormenting and torturing you? Would you not at least curse them before God and threaten them with damnation for their sins hoping to frighten the more devout among them into giving you an easier lot.

Jesus certainly could have done so. He could have threatened the soldiers who flogged Him. He could have threatened the soldiers while they were driving the nails into His hands and into His feet. He could have spat in the face of those who placed the crown of thorns on His head. He certainly would have been close enough to them to have done so. Wouldn't a real man at least stand up for Himself?

Jesus did not do so. He had the right before God to at least threaten them with damnation. He could have threatened them that unless they repented God's wrath would fall upon them for all of life everlasting. This is a threat that we see in the movies all of the time when someone who is about to die under adverse conditions says to someone else, "See you in hell," the assumption being that the person who said and the person who heard it would wind up in the same place. Jesus could have threatened His tormenters without assuming that He would suffer the same fate that they would. Jesus had every right to threaten them with hell. They were flogging and crucifying the Son of God. If that does not deserve damnation, I am not sure what does. Jesus could have hoped that one of them would have lessened His suffering if he were devout and believed such a threat from Jesus. But Jesus made no threats. He did not threaten damnation. He did not spit in anyone's face. He did not threaten them with revenge or anything else. He did not stand up for Himself. He was there to suffer for others.

He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly. And there is the key to the whole thing. If Jesus did not believe in the God who judges justly then Jesus would have reviled in return because the ones who tormented Him would not get any justice at all unless He reviled them. If Jesus did not entrust Himself to the One who judges justly then He would have had to have threatened the ones who made Him suffer. If He did not believe that they were going to receive justice, then the only justice in His eyes that they would have received is the justice that came from Him. He would have had to have threatened them with justice while they were crucifying Him if they were to get any justice at all if He did not entrust Himself to the One who judges justly.

But Jesus actually believes in God. This is another reason why you need to confess the authentic humanity of our Lord. Jesus was authentically human. That means that He lived as humans are supposed

to live. Humans are supposed to live by faith so Jesus lived by faith. Therefore Jesus believes in God and entrusts Himself to Him who judges justly. He knows that God will take care of punishment and so it does not even occur to Him to revile in return or to threaten because He knows that God who judges justly will take care of it.

When Jesus does not revile in return nor threaten while suffering, He is living the life of faith. This is what the life of faith looks like. If you believe in Jesus, you will live the same way.

He has left behind an example for you to follow after His footsteps.

Therefore if you believe in Jesus, then you believe in the God who judges justly. I doubt anyone here would accuse God of being unjust. If you believe in the God who judges justly then you do not need to worry about making sure that everyone around you gets what they deserve. God will give them that. Because you believe in Jesus then you believe in the God who judges justly and it does not even occur to you to revile those who are reviling you. It does not even occur to you to threaten those who are causing you to suffer. It does not occur to you because you know that God will take care of it.

I have only been struck across the face by an adult once in my life. Once the man hit me, I took a step to go after him. Before I could take two steps one of my friends grabbed me by the arm to restrain me with a look on his face like, "What are you thinking?" It was in that moment that I realized that I did not believe in God. Because if I believed in God then I believed that God would give that man what he deserved and that I did not have to do it for God.

God has said, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay." Do you believe that or not? If you do then you believe in the same God that Jesus does and you will not bother to avenge or repay the wrongs committed against you. In fact it will not even occur to you to avenge the wrongs committed against you. It will not occur to you to get your money back from the one who cheated you out of it. It will not occur to you to damage the reputation of those who damaged yours. It will not occur to you to get back at the spouse who committed adultery against you. It will not occur to you to lie about the one who lied about you. And if it does, that is because you do not believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because He has said those words and He does not lie.

I am pleased that I do not hear young people asking this question because they sure asked this question when I was young. "Does God want us to be a floor mat?" The question was meant to question the righteousness and fairness of God. If someone has wronged me, is it not my right under divine justice to go after him and seek revenge? If I let him revile and cause me suffering and do nothing against him, am I not a floor mat allowing him to walk all over me. Does God want me to be a floor mat?

Well, that depends. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered upon the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. He Himself has bore your sins in His body on the tree. It is by His wounds that you are healed even though you were sheep that had wandered off.

By all rights Jesus should have left you to wander off. By all rights you get what you deserve and Jesus should have left you to it. Instead Jesus decided to suffer crucifixion and damnation before God in your stead so that you would never suffer before God in everlasting hellfire.

Jesus did this for all of mankind. He suffered all of eternity of all of hell for each and every one of us. He did it for people who would never believe in Him. He did it for people in our own day and age who ridicule and mock Him for what He did. He did it for people who would never thank Him or praise Him for all that He had done. He did it for people who would ignore Him for what He had done. Now, if you consider this being a floor mat, then yes, God has called you be a floor mat because God has called you to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

You cannot tell me that you will always be a sinner.

That is the excuse that some of you offer to God. "Well, I will never follow in the footsteps of Jesus because I am a sinner."

You will not always be a sinner. God did not create you to sin. Therefore when He restores His creation you will not sin. There will come a time in your life when you will no longer sin. When Jesus raises you from the dead, He will raise you in glory. You will be changed. You will be clothed with immortality and righteousness. At that time you will no longer sin and it will not even occur to you to do so.

And someone will say to me, "Well sure, but that is at the resurrection. I am living before the resurrection. I am always going to be a sinner before the resurrection." To which I reply, "Is the resurrection real?" Is Jesus really going to raise you from the dead? Is it really going to be that Jesus raises you from the dead? Are you really going to live in a new creation without sin and decay and death in it for all of life everlasting? You call it heaven, fine, but nevertheless is it going to be you there or is it going to be someone else? If you say, "yes, it is going to be me there," then I put it to you, you will not always sin. In life everlasting you will not sin. Now why on earth would you want to wait until life everlasting to discontinue sin? If life everlasting has as a part of its constitution, a sinless condition, why are waiting for the resurrection to experience life everlasting? Experience it now. Quit sinning. Put your sinning to death so that you may live. Or do you not believe that it will actually be you in life everlasting that quits sinning?

The resurrection of the dead and life in the new heaven and the new earth is not a Platonic dream. It is not something that occurs in another world or another dimension like on the top of Mount Olympus or in Narnia or somewhere. It happens in this world and it happens to you. Just as real as your grave is your resurrection from the grave. Just as real as your sins is the righteousness in which you will live for all of life everlasting. Now, why wait? Why do you want to wait until life everlasting to put off your sins and live in that sinless state that will be yours at the resurrection?

Now when you do this, when you live in righteousness, you should know that you are doing your righteousness in an evil and vile world and it will hate you for your righteousness and any righteousness that you display. It will persecute you and punish you to get you to go back and be a sinner again. But if you suffer for doing good, then that is the grace of God in your life. And you are following in the footsteps of Jesus.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.