

Exaudi

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St. John 15:26-16:4

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In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We all need help in this world. Maybe that goes without saying. Then again, maybe it doesn't. There are a lot of people who think they don't, that they have the smarts and the answers and the ability to take care of themselves just fine. Maybe you're one of those folks. Do you treasure independence as the highest virtue? Maybe if things get really dicey you might reach out but even then, better if you can just take care of yourself. The reality, on the other hand, is that none of us are truly self-sufficient. We can't make it on our own. We all need parents and family and friends and colleagues to function on a day-to-day basis. When you really stop and think about all the people who do all the things that make living possible, it's mind-blowing. It brings to mind that crazy list of daily bread things which Luther notes in the Small Catechism. Anyone who thinks that they're independent is terribly arrogant and blind and lonely. And the only person they are fooling is themselves.

Jesus, of course, thankfully, knows that you need help even if you're too proud to admit it. That's why He helps you, why He provides you with your daily bread though, like me, you probably break the Second Commandment on a regular basis and don't give Him thanks for all His benefits. How often do we grumble and complain and stomp our feet as though we've been cheated, as though we deserve more than we have? More times than we certainly care to admit. But how often is such earthly care all we think about, all we imagine that we need? How often do we feel content so long as our bellies are full and our bills are paid? If that is all we desire of God, that He make us comfortable, then the devil will be good and sure that you are as comfortable in this life as he can possibly make you. If that is your measure of God's love or your proof that you are a Christian, Satan will make you feel very well cared for on your trip to eternal judgment.

But that isn't the real help that we need, and your gracious Lord knows that. The help that we need is the truth because the truth is in short supply. The world that we live in is filled with what is false. On every side we are surrounded by deceptive and deadly half-truths and outright lies. Our own fleshly mind is filled with deceit and can't be trusted. In fact, we are buried so far under these lies that we can't know or even figure out the truth. There isn't anything about us that

hasn't been corrupted by sin. Our reason and our wisdom are really foolishness because they are clouded over by the always self-serving lie of sin, no matter how smart our grades and friends tell us we are. We are told that good people go to heaven and we nod our heads because that makes sense. We are told that men can be women and vice versa simply because they want to be and we shrug our shoulders and say "If that's what make you happy...why not?" We are told that pornography doesn't hurt anyone and that living with someone apart from marriage is harmless and we silently go along, caring more about ourselves than the tsunami of harm we are willingly enabling. We are told that tithing to the Lord was an excessive Old Testament command that Christians are free from and we withhold from the Lord what is His, hiding behind "I'm not saved by my offering" as though God doesn't know the greed of our hearts. We are told that doctrine isn't really that important, as long as you believe in God and Jesus. We are told that it is unloving and not Christian to warn others about sin and false teaching and call them to repentance so we shut our mouths afraid of being labeled and rejected by the wicked world.

Lies. These are all deadly lies that Satan has released into the world to blind people to the truth and to lull their consciences into a false sense of security. And this list hardly scratches the surface. But they are all so tempting and our sinful reason finds them comfortable and easy. They taste good and most often place no demand upon us. Sometimes the lies are so well presented that even God's children get sucked in and believe them. They are presented as Christian and God-pleasing. Bible verses are attached to them. They are blared over so-called Christian radio and television stations. Millions of dollars are spent consuming them. They are clothed in glossy covers and presented by polished salesmen. "It draws the youth or the unchurched," we are told. And it certainly seems to - like a mosquito to a bug zapper. If we disagree we are mocked, we are shouted down, we are canceled, we are fired, we are dismissed as out of touch or not missional, and we are driven out. What is more, our flesh isn't interested in resisting because resisting is met with counter resistance, rejection, and persecution.

But the lies are still the lies and those lies have both temporal and eternal consequences no matter how much we try to ignore or deny them. These lies have one purpose - to hold as many people as possible in the damning blindness of sin. They are all meant to elevate you in your own eyes as though you could be like God having both what is good and what is evil at the same time. They are meant to help you indulge your sinful desires by calling those desires good. They are meant to keep you from seeing your need for God's mercy and forgiveness and salvation. The better, the wiser, the stronger, the smarter you are the more tempting it is to

think that you don't need what God has to give. And so the temptation to acquiesce grows stronger with every passing day. "Why bother? What does it gain me? Trouble? Enemies? I'm sure I can come up with a better way and God will be fine with it."

This is exactly why the Lord sent the Holy Spirit, the divine Helper, from the Father. We need help to know the truth. It isn't knowable by reason or logic. It isn't a truth within us that we only have to uncover. We sinners don't have it at all unless the Helper comes and helps us by revealing the truth to us. That is because the truth is contrary to every fiber of our sinful being and the devil and the world are constantly seeking to lure us down the broad, beautiful, easy path that is paved with lies and leads to destruction. That the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins and judged Satan and His world, is the truth. And this truth is the truth that saves from death and hell. This is the truth that gives peace in the midst of sorrow and suffering. This is the truth that overcomes the world.

Truth is help. Truth is life. And what is truly marvelous is that the truth is knowable because the Helper has born witness about Him who is the Truth - Jesus Christ. All things that are necessary for our salvation were first proclaimed by the words of the patriarchs and prophets. Then they were revealed and accomplished in all their fulness in Jesus Christ who was incarnate, suffered, died, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven. And now, through the witness of the apostles in Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit continues to bear witness to the truth - Jesus. Just as we don't have partial salvation, we don't have a part of the truth of our salvation. We have it all. We have the full revelation of our sinful condition. We have the clear Law of God which shows us unequivocally what is good and what is evil. We have the full revelation of the way in which God has provided for our redemption from death. We have the eye-witness account of those who heard and saw the Son of God during the three years of His public ministry, who were in the Upper Room the night of our Lord's betrayal, who stood at His cross as He breathed His last, who saw the empty tomb, and who saw Him many times over the course of 40 days, who saw Him ascend into the heavens. We know who Jesus is and what He did. Nothing that is needed to be saved from an eternity under God's righteous wrath has been withheld from you because it is the will of the Father and the rest of the Holy Trinity that you be saved. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit who comes and writes the preached Word into our hearts that we may be certain of the truth, no matter how the mad and ignorant world yells and screams otherwise, no matter how our sin-sickened hearts and minds want to resist and convince us otherwise. In this very hour, the Holy Spirit is at work in you - to expose your sin and bring you to repentance and to comfort those who do, to give

peace to every sinner who, in humble repentance, flees the lies of sin to seek refuge in the truth of Christ's forgiveness.

It is faith, not arrogance, that says "We have pure doctrine, we have the truth, because we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit which is given and proclaimed through the prophetic and apostolic witness. It is a clear Word that our Lord has spoken for the simple reason that He doesn't want us to be uncertain about salvation. That doesn't mean that it always makes sense to us. It only means that we have the truth. Every article of faith that we confess is 100% correct because it is from God. What is not revealed is not necessary for us." It is unbelief and arrogance that says "We can't really know the truth. We must use our reason to discern the truth in Scripture and separate it from what is just the thoughts of men who were bound by the prejudices and errors of their time. We are clearly smarter and more enlightened. We will decide where the Scriptures are right and where they are wrong." Such pride leads only and always to eternal death. The truth and reliability of Scripture have been more than adequately demonstrated. We get into real trouble when we don't what God says as He says it and instead presume to tell Him what He really meant to say and what is possible and not possible for Him to do.

And since we have the truth, there is no excuse under the sun to justify **any** adherence to **any** false doctrine. Because the Lord has revealed the truth to us, all we do is call Him a liar when we do not flee from false teaching when it is shown to us or act like we can't really know what's true and what's not. Lies kill. Lies profane the Name of our Lord and break the Second Commandment. Lies hurt us and they hurt our neighbor when we partake of them. When we speak or associate ourselves with a lie, we tell our neighbor, who knows us to bear the Name of God, that the lie is acceptable and pleasing to God, that God tolerates false teaching about Himself, lies about who He is and what He has done and said. But God will not let those who profane His Name and Word go unpunished. Flee the lies of the world. More importantly, flee the lies of those who, in the Name of Christ, speak contrary to the Christ of Holy Scripture. In love, point them out for the sake of your neighbor so that they can avoid such lies as well. Cling fast to what your Lord has said. It doesn't matter if the world calls you closed-minded or foolish or arrogant. They are blind and will taste the bitter fruits of their foolishness. The Word of your Lord is life and light. It is comfort and peace.

But know that you will be hated for confessing the truth, even as the Lord Jesus Himself was. For all the miracles He performed, for all the good news He proclaimed, for all the mercy He showed, He was hated and betrayed and crucified,

most especially by those who believed themselves to be strong, holy, and smart. The darkness hates the light. Sin hates the truth. But our Lord was vindicated as He rose again on the third day and is now seated at the right hand of God. Though you will be hated and rejected by the world, perhaps even most fiercely by those who proclaim a false Christ, the Lord Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit upon you to help you and assure you of the truth and comfort you in your hour of trial. You have the Word of God. It is an impregnable fortress wall to defend you. Not even the gates of hell can breach it. The world and the devil will be dashed to pieces by those simplest of words "This is My Body, given for you." And though you too may be called upon to bear witness by your death, your faith in the Jesus of Holy Scripture and the salvation He has bestowed on you in Holy Baptism will be vindicated. You too will rise from the dead and be granted the crown of everlasting life, while all who cling to lies and torment Christ's Church will gnash their teeth and suffer their eternal punishment.

Rejoice, all you who love the truth which God has clearly spoken and still speaks! The Lord has not hidden His face from you. He has taught you His way, the way of faith, the way of the cross. He has displayed His right arm, His crucified Son, before the eyes of the whole world that all who believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life. All of man's wisdom stumbles over the Crucified One who laid down His spotless life for sinners. He is the pinnacle of God's wisdom, the exact imprint of God's nature. All of man's arrogance and pride and vainglory and strength are brought to utter desolation in the Lamb of God who was slain. Christ is your light and your salvation. He is the stronghold of your life. He is the truth incarnate. Who or what do you have to fear if the God of heaven and earth did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for you that you might live? He has caused His Holy Word to be written down for you in Holy Scripture and translated into your language so that you might have and read and hear the truth and hearing the truth be set free from sin and everlasting death, free from your enemies that rise up against you, free from an evil conscience, free from fear and sorrow. You have been given a new heart that seeks after God and loves His Word. You have been given a new spirit, THE SPIRIT, the Spirit of God who breathes the life of Christ into you through the Word and Holy Sacraments.

Do not be afraid. The Lord has helped you. He has given you His Holy Spirit that you might know the absolute and eternal truth that your sins are forgiven by His Blood and that the world with all of its lies has been overcome and is passing away. This glorious truth is eternal and it is this truth that will bring you safely to eternal life.

In the Name of +Jesus.