

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 25  
Saturday, November 18, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, November 19, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

# “Life in the Family”

Zephaniah 1:7-16

In our Scripture readings today, we see both the true nature of God and the false attitudes that much of the world has toward God.

As I said last week, our world has attempted to reduce God into an impersonal force, with marginal power, whose presence is a matter of convenience, at best. And for many, God’s presence is a matter of indifference. And for a growing number, God’s presence brings forth hostility.

These attitudes are not new concepts introduced into the world in modern times. We hear the Lord speak through the prophet Zephaniah and chastise (in his words) “those who are complacent” – “who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will He do ill.’” Sounds a lot like our world today. Our Old Adam’s deepest desire is that God is nothing and powerless. Satan wants you to believe that God can’t do good or bad, so just ignore Him.

For a number of years, the American Humanist Association, whose motto is “Good without a God” has been promoting celebrating Christmas without celebrating Christ. They say, “Why believe in God? Just be good for goodness sake.”

A spokesman for the American Humanist Association also said, and I quote, “atheists, agnostics, and non-theists feel a little alone during the holidays”

because of the domination of traditional religion. Or, it might be that they feel empty and alone during that time of year because their life is absent of Jesus and His Church. They say, of course, they are not doing any of this to have a debate over the existence of God, but, and I quote, “we are trying to plant a seed of rational thought and critical thinking and questioning in people’s minds.”

It never ceases to amaze me. Those who are convinced in their mind that there is no God, and when this life ends, there is nothing beyond our time here on earth – those who are convinced of this sure do spend a great deal of their allotted time on earth trying to convince others that they are right and we are wrong, given that you or I changing our minds supposedly would have no affect any outcome. In their minds, according to their thinking, what you believe has no effect on what happens to you when this life ends. Yet, they devote so much time and energy to this topic – curious.

It is almost as if the presence of Christ’s Church is a constant reminder of the Law of God, under which they live, which is written on all men’s hearts. It must be a terrible burden to walk through life with the burden of guilt and no hope for the future.

This is the world in which we live. The world says, “If God is real, He is powerless. He can’t do anything. ‘He will not do good; He will not do ill.’ If He is real, He’s just sitting up in the clouds looking down from a distance.” Or, a growing, common view of God is that He is nothing more than an impersonal force of nature – He is “Mother Nature” personified.

He is not. He is your Father in heaven who created you; who gave you life; and even more, who sent His only-begotten Son to die to take away the guilt of your sin so that you may have the best life (and I am not talking about life here on earth), that you may have eternal life – with Him; and He has sent His Holy Spirit

to dwell in your heart and make you His temple.

Look at the words of the Introit, like David, we approach God in terms of His true character. It is in mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness that He deals with us and He answers us. Our Father loves us and listens to us when we cry out to Him.

In our Epistle reading, Paul tells of how God has made us children of light. We need not fear the darkness of sin and the wrath that God will pour out on Judgment Day when there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in that place of outer darkness, as Jesus warns in our Gospel reading. But rather we are protected by the full armor of God – faith, love, hope, and salvation.

But the world says, “Why believe in God? The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill. God is powerless – if He even does exist.” Critics of Christ and the Church say that religion is a vestige of “Bronze Age thinking.” (That is an actual quote.) Why would enlightened, advanced “thinkers” want to go back to the Bronze Age?

This is the technique used by humanists and atheists for the past four centuries or so. The technique is this: they divide the world into two groups. There are those who are “thinkers” and “enlightened” and “educated.” And there those, like myself, who are embarrassingly ignorant, small-minded, Bronze Age idol worshiping, back woods, Bible thumping hicks. Those are the only two groups they recognize, and they want you to be embarrassed to be a child of God.

The so-called “thinkers” in our society want you to be embarrassed by the love of your Father in heaven. I am reminded of my freshman year in high school. As a family, we always ate supper together at 5:00 – every night. I was playing basketball with some new classmates of mine in our neighborhood– as I had moved from Martin Luther School (a small private school in Louisville KY) to a

large, public high school; I expanded my circle of acquaintances among the kids in the neighborhood.

As 5:00 approached, I informed them that I had to get home for supper. They laughed at me and called me “momma’s boy” and other derogatory names which would be inappropriate to say from the pulpit. They laughed at the notion that I had to go home for supper, because they never ate together with their families. And I learned in the years to come that some of them had some, shall we say, interesting family dynamics.

But those guys had no idea how good life within a family could be. And they wanted me to be embarrassed about my family dynamic. How ridiculous is that?

This is the same thing that we hear from the Humanist crowd found in every form of media and on most every college campus in the Western World. They are empty and alone, and they want you to join them in their emptiness. They want you to call them “enlightened thinkers.” And they want you to be embarrassed by the love of your Father, and by your family within Christ’s Church. How ridiculous is that?

Our family dynamic is something special. We have a Father in heaven who loves us very much. We have a brother in Christ who willingly departed the glory of heaven to lay down His life so that we may live – and have life to the full. We have a Lord who has declared us to be righteous and has made us holy. We gather as a family and eat together. The fools who say there is no God have no idea how good life is within the family of God. Amen.