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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Epiphany 2
January 17, 2021

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, there is a voice.

There is a voice that speaks to all of our lives.

There is a voice that speaks to all of our lives, a voice that bids our attention.

There is a voice which sounds forth from the great beyond, a voice that is a clarion call, loud and clear.

If we but listen carefully.

There is a voice which speaks to us.

A voice which speaks to us telling us that which is for our good.

There is a voice out there.

PAUSE

But, you ask, "How do we know this voice?"

"How do we know the good it speaks?"

"How do can we trust this voice?"

Because I tell you, we can see it, we can see the good it promises.

Indeed, we live the good it speaks.

Indeed, we live the good this voice has spoken.

PAUSE

Consider for instance, sisters and brothers in Christ, human society.

Consider that at some point our human ancestors heard it within their spirits...

Our ancestors heard internally that voice that said...

Human community is good.

They heard, "Human community is good." They recognized that human community is good, and so then our ancestors formed society.

And our ancestors heard internally as well that voice that said...

Familial bonds are good.

Human love, faithful relationships, childrearing, all this is good.

And our ancestors formed then the institution of marriage.

And our ancestors heard internally that voice that said...

Government is good. Government is necessary for order and stability, and so our ancestors established a system of government.

That voice also said...

Education is good. Passing along knowledge is a blessing. Providing instruction to young people is a benefit, and so schools were created.

That voice also said...

Medicine is good. Helping people live healthier, and longer lives is a blessing. And so hospitals and the medical field emerged.

That voice also said...

Sanitation is a good, and so public sanitation, and water treatment plants emerged.

That voice also said...

Music and the arts are good, and so art museums, and concert halls, and dance halls emerged.

That voice also said...

Nature and wildlife are good, and so the Environmental Protection Agency emerged, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency emerged and the National Parks Service emerged

Nearly everything, nearly everything we see around us is the result of that voice, that voice from beyond, speaking...speaking to our spirits, and inspiring the human race to live better, more productive, more benevolent and moral lives.

We know this voice which speaks that which is good for us.

We know this voice.

We know this voice because we see the many fruits of this voice, which has spoken to the human race over the centuries, over the millennia.

PAUSE

Unfortunately, though, many persons would probably not describe the world around them as the result of a voice having spoken to the human race.

Many persons find it difficult to recognize the voice that is speaking to them from beyond.

Take Samuel, for instance.

In our first reading this morning Samuel who is just a young boy hears a voice from beyond.

Samuel hears a voice, and Samuel thinks this voice is that of Eli.

And this reading is actually rather comedic.

Samuel hears a voice over and over again, and each time he runs to Eli and says, "Here I am! What's up?"

And Eli says, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed."

So, again and again a voice calls to Samuel, and Samuel goes to Eli and says, "Your called?"

But it is not Eli's voice that is calling out to Samuel.

No, it is voice from beyond which is calling to Samuel.

Yes, we humans have a tough time identifying the voice from beyond that is speaking to us.

And indeed, many persons would simply describe their reality, civilization and all that is therein...

Many person would describe their reality as the result of human ingenuity, as the result of human innovation, as the result of human creativity and imagination and enterprise.

And although I am always amazed at what we humans come up with next...indoor plumbing, the automobile, the Internet, the cell phone...

Although I am always amazed at what we humans dream up, I am not so arrogant to think we humans can claim all the credit.

The world exists, from which then we create and invent.

The sun, the air, the sea, the minerals in the earth—all these things had their being, their creation long before we ever emerged on the planet.

A voice spoke this world into being for our good, long before we ever emerged as a human species and began our reign here as the caretakers of this planet.

Light and life was here long before us, and so we would be hard pressed to think that what we do is really our own creation.

At best, we might be called co-creators.

At best, we have to recognize the voice that speaks to our spirits and inspires us to invent.

To be sure, we should never forget that the word “inspires” shares the same root as “spirit.”

It is the Spirit of God, the breath of God, the voice of God which is what truly inspires us to accomplish anything as a human species.

PAUSE

Consider Johann Sebastian Bach as an example.

We might know that the baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach, a good Lutheran by the way...

We might know that Johann Sebastian Bach wrote on all of the music he composed the words “Soli Deo Gloria.”

Translation: “To the glory of God alone.”

On all of Bach’s musical compositions, those words appear.

To the glory of God alone.

In other words, Bach would seem to be saying, is saying, that it is really not me who is composing, but God.

All the music is out there, all the notes are out therein the ether, they just need to be arranged on paper.

And it is the voice that spoke to Bach's spirit that arranged the notes.

In fact, Bach once said, "I play the notes as they are written, but it is God who makes the music."

Luther would surely say a similar thing about preaching, "I just speak the words on the paper, but it is God who makes a person come to faith."

A doctor might say, "I just proscribe the medicine. I just perform the surgery, but it is God who does the healing."

A government official might say, "I just make, interpret, or enforce the law, but it is God who creates order and peace."

So on and so forth.

Yes there is a voice that speaks that which is good for us.

At best, we are but instruments of God through which God accomplishes his good in the world.

God's good is accomplished by the voice speaking to our spirits.

PAUSE

But then, but then, this voice from beyond, Friends...

But then, this voice from beyond comes into our world, and in our gospel reading for today, we see that this voice, which has come into our world, speaks to Philip.

This voice speaks to Philip and says, "Follow me."

This voice, which has been a voice from beyond, and is now a voice that has come to be among us in the person of Jesus...

This voice speaks to Philip and says, "Follow me."

Now, remember, now remember, that this voice always speaks that which is good for us.

Luther said it this way, "If God told me to eat dung, not only would I do it, I would know that it is good for me."

This divine voice always speaks that which is good for us.

And that which is now good for Philip and which is good for all people, for you and for me...is to follow Jesus.

Following Jesus the paramount good in this life.

The gospel is clear, pure and simple, Jesus says, “Follow me.”

PAUSE

Now, in a few moments then we are going to sing a hymn together entitled, “Lead On, O King Eternal.”

It is a hymn about our commitment to follow our Lord.

“Lead on, O King Eternal.”

It is a hymn about our trust in God to bring us to a better day.

“Lead on, O King Eternal.”

It is a hymn about knowing that following God is to be blessed with goodness.

“Lead on, O King Eternal.”

It is hymn about recognizing that even though the sinful powers of this broken world might hurl virus and pandemic at us...

Even though the sinful powers of this world might wield insurrection and sedition at our government...

Even though the sinful powers of this world might bombard us with unemployment and economic hardship...

Even though the sinful powers of this world might cast fire and wind, and rain, hail and frost, and ice in our direction...

Even though, sin will do its darnedest to break us, we can be assured of God’s goodness by following his Son, because in his Son Jesus Christ, God has conquered the power of sin.

PAUSE

And so, we respond to God’s bidding...

We respond to God’s invitation...

We respond to the voice of our Savior, the voice that has come into this world...

We respond...

Lead on, O King Eternal.

Lead on, O King Eternal.

Lead on, O King Eternal.

Thanks be to God. Amen.