

For the 11 AM Service, May 23, 2021

Intro into “Holy Spirit”: Anna’s Children’s Message

Reading / Reflection ahead of “Rock of Ages”:

In making ready to leave Sinai to go into the Promised Land in Exodus 33, Moses implored God to go with him and the Israelites and to not abandon them at such a critical time. Moses pleaded with God in this way because of God’s fierce anger over the peoples’ idolatry with the Golden Calf Aaron had made for them in Moses’ absence.

¹⁷The Lord replied to Moses, “I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name.”

¹⁸Moses responded, “Then show me your glorious presence.”

¹⁹The Lord replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. ²⁰But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.” ²¹The Lord continued, “Look, stand near me on this rock. ²²As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the...[cleft] of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.”

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul would identify Jesus as being the Rock in the Sinai wilderness from which Moses and all the people slaked their thirst with the living water of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). As the cleft in the rock in the wilderness provided Moses shelter from the overpowering glory of God, so may the cleft in Christ’s side made by the spear of the Roman guard provide shelter to all who seek forgiveness of sin and freedom to live a life of purity. “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.”

Reading / Reflection ahead of “(The) Old Rugged Cross”:

Crosses today – be they small and delicate, worn on a fine gold chain, or large and ornate adorning the walls or steeples of places of Christian worship – often bear little resemblance to the cruel instruments of execution they really were. The Roman Catholic crucifix preserves the horrors of this means of death. And it would be understandable from a human point of view if the followers of Christ had completely done away with this ghastly symbol early in the life of the church. Yet, they possessed a deeper spirituality than that and saw in the cross of Christ the very means of God to save the world. But this was only *after* Jesus’ resurrection from the death that was assumed to be the end of this “problem Child of Palestine”.

And so, the cross of Christ has ever since been infused with double meaning: It is “the emblem of suffering and shame” AND the means by which humanity is pardoned from sin and sanctified. No wonder the hymn writer could pen the words, “I’ll cherish the old rugged cross....”

Reading / Reflection ahead of “Because He Lives”:

It should have been the end...no one rises from the grave...what dies is dead, lifeless. Except for Christ – and except for all who believe in Him: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only [begotten] Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

And so, it is God’s desire that because Jesus lives, we live. And because Jesus is eternal, we are eternal. And because He lives, we can face without fear anything the world has to throw at us. Let our song join the one that never ends.

Reading / Reflection ahead of “The Blessing”:

We began this set of anthems on this day of Pentecost with a song to the Holy Spirit, asking that we might become more aware of God’s Presence; that we might experience the glory of God’s goodness.

Moses begged God to show him His “glorious Presence”. God responded by showing Moses His glory from behind saying, “...You may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.”

In Hebrew, the word translated “Presence” is also translated “Face”. And so, *the Presence of God* – a term of transcendence – becomes a deeply personal term, when we hear it as “*the Face of God*”.

“The Lord bless you and keep you / the Lord make His ‘glorious Presence’ – His face – to shine upon you and be gracious unto you / the Lord turn His ‘glorious Presence’ – His face – toward you and give you Peace” – in the morning, in the evening, in your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore (Ps. 121:7-8). Amen and Amen.