

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

1 Timothy 2:1-6

Christ is arisen. He is risen indeed. He is risen, and risen, He reigns. Therefore is it that we hear what we hear today, while we are in the midst of the week of weeks, that is: the great seven week festival for His resurrection, about offering *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving* for those who reign: because our risen Saviour reigns; and because our risen Saviour reigns for our salvation

His will is for us to *lead a quiet and peaceable life*, as the Apostle writes it, as we hear it. Apparently, we are not to rule the world; nor are we to have particularly exciting or interesting lives, it seems, and do great things for which others would admire and envy us. No, for His will is for us to live *in all godliness and reverence*, as the Apostle also writes it, which apparently goes with leading a *quiet and peaceable life* rather than a glorious and exciting one of fame and fortune and fun.

A such life in search of power or excitement or the admiration and envy of others, it cannot but distract us from that which is *His will for us, who desires for all men to be saved*, that we live in His love and seek and receive salvation from Him in His Word and worship, *in all godliness and reverence*. So apparently, from what we hear, we, as His Christians should not seek to rule the world, or even as His Church.

That is a bit of a shame, though, is it not? Is it not obvious that everything would be so much better if the Church ruled the world, that is: if we as His Christians did? Well, the testimony of history is a different one, if we bother to take more than the most shallow look at things; what usually has happened when the Church has ruled in the world is that the task of ruling in the world ended up ruling in the Church, and the Church became the world.

At any rate, apparently, as we hear it today, it is not *His will for us, who desires for all men to be saved*, that we rule the world. No, for He Himself does that, who is *the Firstborn from the dead and Ruler over the kings of the earth*, as the Book of Revelation says it.

He who rules those who rule in the world, and *who desires for all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth*, He works the salvation of all who can and will be saved. He does that when He makes those who rule in the world to secure peace and order in society, so that we can *lead a quiet and peaceable life* in His Word and worship, *in all godliness and reverence*.

And He works the salvation of all who can and will be saved, also, when He makes those who rule in the world to allow His Church and His Christians a place in public life, so that others can be called into a life *in all godliness and reverence* in His Word and worship.

Therefore is it that the Apostle bothers to *exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority*; because, as he also writes it, *this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth*.

Now, it might be challenging for some of us to hear all this and take it to heart in light of what we have seen happen in these last few years, as so many of those who rule in the world obviously are openly hostile to the faith, and ever so much more, in light of what we have seen through this very last year, that so many of those who rule in the world, although not deliberately hostile to the Church of Christ, have proven themselves ignorant and indifferent toward the faith and acted as tyrants, setting themselves up as lords and masters of the faith by prohibiting certain aspects of the exercise of the faith. Certainly, this must change everything, must it not? Certainly the Apostle cannot have had a such situation in mind when he wrote what we hear today, and urged *that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*? Certainly, in a situation as that in which we find ourselves, the time for *leading a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence* is over; certainly the time has come for Christians to stand up to the enemies of the faith, to seek to seize power and see to it that the will of God prevail in the world?

The truth is, though, as we would all know, if we had bothered to think about what we know, that when the Apostle wrote what we hear today, he did not assume that those who ruled the world would be good and godly people, or even decent. He wrote this while the world was ruled by Roman Emperors, tyrants who claimed to be gods, and who would only allow the Church of Christ to live in peace provided that she observe specific ungodly demands regarding worship, all for the common good.

Clearly, what we hear today that the Apostle wrote applies not only when rulers are good and decent; clearly, the idea is not that when they are not, Christians should seek to rule the world to see to it that the will of God prevail.

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, as the Apostle writes it, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, to be testified to at the proper time. God is God, He alone, and we are not, not even as His Christians; ultimately, He alone knows what serves His good purpose, and the salvation of all who can and will be saved. And He Himself will see to it, that His good will prevail. He did that through those centuries when His Church suffered open and outright persecution from a hostile empire as well as from local tyrants and mindless mobs. He did that through the centuries when His Church was cursed by worldly power, ever tempted to forget that she is His Church, and that the testimony to be testified to at the proper time is always that of the Man Christ Jesus, Son of God and Mediator between God and men, who gave Himself as ransom for all.

As long as this testimony lives in His Church, His Church will live, regardless of power or persecution. And His Church always will live, and always has; such is His promise, that the gates of Hell shall never prevail over her. At all times He will see to it that His salvation is *testified to at the proper time*, so that those who can and will be saved will *be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth*.

And to *come to the knowledge of the Truth*, that really is to be saved. Well, not to merely know about the Truth, as if it had nothing to do with me, that this is what the Bible teaches, and the Church, but to hear it and take it to heart so as to seek my salvation in it; that is to *be saved*. For the Truth of which the Apostle writes is that *the Man Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all as the one Mediator between God and men*; that the Son of God, who is Himself God from eternity, had Himself made Man to take upon Himself the sin of all sinners to bear it for us, and the judgement of God against it, eternal death and damnation, that is: the fullness of death and damnation, the rightful wrath of God against all wrong, His holy hatred against all evil. In His sufferings and death He has borne all judgement, and taken it away from us. And so it is really borne and taken away, dealt with and done away with, so that it is no more before Him and cannot and shall not condemn us before His judgement. The Truth of God, which He has His Church proclaim to sinners, presents His salvation as full and complete, with nothing missing, nothing left for us to do. And so, to seek salvation in Him and what He has done for us, that is: to have *come to the knowledge of the Truth*, that really means to *be saved*, fully and for real.

And in the Truth to be testified to at the proper time, of the Man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all as the one Mediator between God and men, in it the love of God shines upon us as His power of salvation, so that all who can be saved also will be saved in that they come to the knowledge of the Truth.

Not all will be saved, though. For the Word of God of His salvation comes with the offensive implication that you are *in need* of salvation; that God alone is God, and you are not, which means that you owe it to God to live in full and complete submission to Him, and your failure to do so makes you to be a poor miserable sinner and makes you to have justly deserved His temporary and eternal punishment. And it is deeply engrained in the hearts and minds of sinners, the ancient lie of the evil one, that I am equal to God, or at least *almost* equal to Him, as the rightful judge and master of good and evil.

In the days of the Apostle, it was customary for the Emperor, and for kings and rulers in general, to be called both *God* and *Saviour*, just as a matter of common courtesy. The Apostle plays upon this, when, with reference to *kings and all who are in authority*, he urges that they be prayed for, because *God our Saviour desires for all men to be saved*. And also when he writes that *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men*. He is making a pun out of this: that those who rule in the world and call themselves gods and saviours, they are in need of salvation themselves; and *God our Saviour desires for all men to be saved*. Therefore is it, also, that the Apostle urges that Christians not view those whom God has set in authority with contempt, or our other enemies, but rather *that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving* be made for them. *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires for all men to be saved, including our enemies; therefore we should pray for their salvation, and not stand in the way of their salvation by being troublemakers and rabblers, giving the faith a bad name and making sure that no one will want to listen to us and His Word of salvation from us.*

And because He desires for *us* to be saved, also, He calls us at all times, whatever happens in the world around us, to *lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence, seeking our salvation in His Word and worship, in which all things good and glorious are given to us, so that we shall live and reign with Him for ever in His Kingdom.*

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing. *Amen.*