

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost John 6:22-35

In one of his many letters, the holy Apostle Paul admonishes his apprentice Timothy to stand firm and speak firmly against *anyone who teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness*; and he describes those who follow such false teachers as *depraved in mind and deprived of the Truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain; of financial gain, that would be, for as the Apostle goes on to write: there is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we bring take nothing with us out of the world.*

What the Apostle writes to his apprentice reflects what we hear our Lord Jesus saying today: *Do not labour for the food which perishes, but rather for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because upon Him God the Father has set His seal.*

It is false teaching, and they are false teachers who teach it, that godliness is a means for financial gain; that what Holy Scripture teaches are methods to obtain worldly wealth and health and happiness, and that it is such things one should seek in the faith.

Such teaching is *a different doctrine* and it *does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And as such, those who teach it fall under the judgement the Apostle has pronounced elsewhere, in another Letter: *Even if we ourselves or an angel from Heaven were to preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*. Christians should not listen to and be led by such false preachers and teachers. To do so is sin against God. And worse, to do so is to have oneself *deprived of the Truth*. And the teaching that rather than commit oneself to God in prayer and ask Him for all things good, one should *claim* what one wants from God, for when you do that, God has to obey you, obviously that *does not agree with the teaching that accords with godliness*.

Rather, *the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness* will teach Christians to seek and submit to the will of God; to labour *for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because upon Him God the Father has set His seal*; or in other words: to seek *salvation*, and seek it in Him whom God has appointed and approved as Saviour, and only in Him.

And this would be our Lord Jesus Himself, Son of God and God Himself from eternity, in whom there never was neither sin nor evil, who nevertheless had Himself born into sinful Mankind, and baptised with sinners, to take our sin upon Himself, and bear it for us, and His own judgement against it. Upon Him God set His seal when He was baptised with sinners to *fulfil all righteousness*, as He Himself said it, and the Father's voice declared from Heaven that *this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased*. And upon Him God would set His seal anew, when, after He had suffered and died for the sin of all sinners, God would raise Him from death and so show that both the Son Himself and what He has done for the salvation of sinners is pleasing to Him. Upon Him God the Father has bestowed the name that is above all names, the name of *Saviour*, in that He who has Himself borne all judgement for us is the one who shall come in glory to judge the living and the dead. As our Lord Jesus had also said it: *As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgement to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.*

There is no worship of the true God that is not worship of our Lord Jesus, and that as Saviour. And contrariwise: worship that is not worship of our Lord Jesus as Saviour is *not* worship of the true God. Any image and idea of a god that does not know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus, and our Lord Jesus as God Himself from eternity, and what He has done for us with His sufferings and death as the only salvation available to sinners, any such image and idea of a god is nothing other than an *idol*, that is: a false god; even if those who worship it refer to it as *God*, or *Jesus*, and call themselves *Christian*, and cite bits and pieces of Holy Scripture.

To honour God is to honour the Son and what He has done for our salvation by seeking salvation in Him, rather than to seek worldly wealth and health and happiness from God, or claim and demand it. It is to seek salvation in Him rather than in our own goodness and godliness and good works. It is to seek salvation in Him alone, rather than seeking His aid and assistance in saving ourselves by our own goodness and godliness and good works.

As we hear it today, when they asked Him: *What shall we do, that we may be doing the works of God?*, He answered and said to them: *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.* This is the work of God. It is that which is pleasing to Him.

And it is that which He Himself works in us, by the power of His love, by means of His Word of His love and what His love has done for us. Salvation is from God, and from Him alone. And what is pleasing to Him is that we honour Him whom He has appointed and approved as our only Saviour, so that we will actually be saved the only way sinners can be saved. For His will, more than anything else, is our salvation, *your* salvation.

Our Lord Jesus is Himself, as we hear it today that He said it, *the bread of God who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world. He is Himself the food that endures to eternal life.*

As a sign of this, He had fed the crowds with five loaves and two fish on the other side of the sea. That was why they now came to Him, on this side of the sea, in order to have Him feed them always with bread for this life, with worldly life and health and happiness. For they had not seen the sign, not really; they had not seen the *significance* of the sign.

Our Lord Jesus, who knows all things, knew this. He knew that what they sought in Him was *not* the things of God, but rather the things of this life. And He confronted them with this idolatry, and did so with an oath. *Most assuredly, I say to you, He said, or rather, as it is in the original Greek: Amen! Amen! I say to you: you seek me, not because you saw the signs, but rather because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labour for the food that perishes, but rather for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. With such strong words did He plead with them to seek the things of God rather than the things of the world, and to seek the things of God in Him.*

And when they asked Him: *What shall we do, that we may be doing the works of God?*, He answered and said to them: *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*

So they said to Him: *What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?* Those who seek the things of the world will always also seek worldly assurance of the things of God; because they do not really seek the things of God, but rather the things of the world, themselves and their own pleasure; those who seek such worldly assurance, most often they will actually seek *entertainment* rather than really assurance concerning the things of God.

And our Lord Jesus referred them back to the sign He had already given them, and the significance of the sign, which they failed to see. *My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven, He said.*

For the bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world. He is Himself, as we hear it today that He said it, the bread of God who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world. He is Himself the food that endures to eternal life.

He gives life to world; for He has borne and taken away the sin of the world. He has taken it upon Himself, having been baptised with us sinners, and borne it before the judgement of God where all sin must be judged and damned and destroyed, and die, crucified and cursed for it and with it, in our stead and on our behalf. And so He has borne it and taken it away from us sinners, our sin, and all judgement against it, He who shall Himself come in glory to judge the living and the dead. He has won for Himself the right to judge whomever He will free from eternal death and damnation. For He has Himself paid the price and penalty for the sin of all sinners, in full and in abundance. And as such, He is risen from the dead, and He is again in His glory as God, and lives and reigns forever. And He has His set His Church in the world to proclaim His promise to sinners of full and complete forgiveness for all the sins and shortcomings of all sinners, of salvation and eternal life.

The Gospel is His promise, that because of what He has done for us, we shall not perish and die forever in His wrath, rather, we shall live and be with Him forever in the fullness of His goodness and His glory. And in the testimony of His faithful Church He speaks Himself, and with her testimony He gives Himself to all who hear His promise and take it to heart, with all that He is and all that is His; and with His Word He breathes His Spirit and His own life into us, so that we come alive to Him and begin to believe in Him, and belong to Him, and shall live with Him for ever.

And as a sign of all this He gives us His body and blood, for real, to eat and drink, in His festive meal of salvation; what He gave for us is given to us, also, anew, so that we may know that what He gave for all was given also for me, as it is given to me, His body and blood, and with it His salvation and Himself and all that He is and all that is His.

From His seat in Heaven He comes to us and feeds us with Himself and gives His own life to us. And we shall be with Him forever in His Kingdom, in the fullness of His glory, and never hunger nor ever thirst for anything ever again.

Now, to Him, whose power works in us and can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, be glory, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.