

“Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai”

Before I get into this text from the Holy Gospel – the image from the Old Testament Reading of Abram taking all of those animals, cutting them in half and laying the out, is the way that people would make an agreement, a covenant with people, and the person who was ‘sealing the deal’ would walk through those items – carrying a torch. That would be the way that he would say I will keep this agreement with you. Because no one could see God and live, God made Abram, remember it wasn't Abraham yet, made Abram fall asleep. And so the Lord came and walked through the halves of the animals as a smoking firepot – in other words – it was bright – and had a torch – which was the custom – going through. In other words – God was saying “look, I know you are not going to be able to keep your end of the bargain – but I will keep MY end of the bargain!” I just had to remind you of that. What an incredible time – and this was before the Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham. He keeps all of His promises, and even says that as numerous as the stars in the sky – so his descendants shall be. We have been adopted in as descendants of Abraham – through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel from Luke really gets down to who are the descendants of Abraham? Who will join Jesus in eternity? Luke gives us a powerful portrait of Jesus, God's only Son. Jesus tells those who ask Him – who will go to heaven. Jesus surprises many by telling them three important things:

1. There is only One Way to heaven
2. The sad truth that not everyone will get there
3. And be sure to not wait too long – because when you finally get around to it - it may be too late!

There are some people who might say ‘I am enjoying myself too much. I will give myself to the Lord tomorrow.’ You only hope there is a tomorrow. For many, these are not messages that are “feel good.” You know – that make you feel happy inside? If you know Jesus as your Lord – He is not talking to you! There can be no hiding or covering up the truth! You know what happens when you walk into a dark room and you turn on the light? What happens? You see everything! Before that time – you might be stumbling along. There are many who often customize them to their own liking – so that in their minds - everyone gets to fit in – even to the point of asking “what kind of a God would not let people go to heaven?” It is called ‘free will’ my friends - God has given people a choice, and Jesus was quite clear in His message: there is only ONE Way! It saddens me when I hear people say “there is more than one way to heaven” – or “that Jesus is a way” – but not the way. I believe that God's Word from Proverbs 16:25 fits here so perfectly, it nails it on the head - it says: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”*

Just recently, someone close to me had a conversation with someone who could not get it into her head that not everybody is going to get to heaven. She thinks it is one big club – that you put your time in here and you are just going to go and get there. There are some stipulations.

We are surrounded by a lot of people who believe in a whole lot of things – and there are many who think they believe in Jesus – only sadly, it is a different Jesus that they have contorted and twisted to fit their ideology. It is a different Jesus that they are following. The Jesus, who is God’s only Son – spoke plainly and with certainty that there is only one way to the Father. In John 14:6, on the night before He died – in answer to Thomas’ question, Jesus was clear in saying “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.*” There is no room for interpretation or dissection! There is no wiggle room – no twisting or contorting of the meaning to fit somebody’s agenda. Let me say this again: Jesus is the only way to salvation! Luke reminds us of this fact in his writing of the Book of Acts. In Acts 4:12 Luke says, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven Agiven to men by which we must be saved.*”

My brothers and sisters in Christ – here are SEVEN things that you can be sure of, recorded in God’s Holy Word – and they are undeniably true:

- Jesus is the Messiah,
- Jesus is God’s Son, the Incarnate Word of God (see John 1:1)
- Jesus fulfills the prophesies of Scriptures,
- Jesus died on the cross, (there are some who say He swooned and was put into a cool cave. How do you explain the scars and the beating that took place on His back when He was scourged? Do you think you could get up after three days in a nice cool tomb? I don’t think so!)
- and because of dying on the cross, Jesus saved humanity,
- Jesus rose from the dead – there was no swooning - His tomb was, is, and is still empty – He walked out of it!
- and Jesus is the only way to heaven -and those points are non-negotiable!

Plain and simple - if you don’t believe these 7 points – then I am sorry to tell you that you are not a Christian! I don’t see how you can call yourself a Christian if you don’t believe these!

We had a conversation the other night at Vestry. There is a big chart that I put outside my office – on the wall. It is about the sects and cults that try to call themselves Christians. An example of what it says is the Mormons. They were formed by Joseph Smith, and there is the Book of Mormon – Doctrine and Covenants; the pearl of great price, plus the Bible – King James Version only; with Smith’s inspired version. God the Father was once a man, but progressed to godhood. It goes on. Here is the kicker – who is Jesus? Jesus is a separate god from the Father – Elohim. He was created as a spirit child by the father and mother in heaven, and is the elder brother of all men and spirit beings, including Lucifer. I am not going to continue to read this for you. When you come into the office are – look at the chart. We are not talking about denominations here – denominations are Christians. The Baptists are a denomination; the Seventh Day Adventists are a denomination; the Lutherans and Methodists are denominations, we worship a little differently, but we all worship the same God. It is

important that we understand that. If you don't follow the seventh things that I listed for you then you are not a Christian.

In today's Holy Gospel – Jesus was asked about the way to heaven and He replied, *“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”* (Luke 13:24) And you know what? This was not the first time that Jesus spoke about this subject. In John 10:9, Jesus laid out the path to salvation for us, saying *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”* The truth is that complete and eternal rest can only be found in, through and by Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Messiah!

And Jesus further explained this in Matthew 7:14 saying that “the way” would not be an easy one: He said, *“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”* Jesus is THE WAY to heaven – He is not one of many – or an alternative route that complies with political correctness, or today's culture – which allows us to not let people feel left out. Heaven forbid we all don't get ‘trophies.’ Jesus is the Way to heaven! He is not one of many – or an alternative route. The truth is that Jesus is the target of a *very specific, modern agenda – a politically correct, multicultural agenda*, an agenda that says *diversity is always good, truth is negotiable*, and every opinion is equally legitimate – that there are pluriform truths – meaning that there is not just ONE truth. What you believe is good for you, and what I believe is good for me – and then let's just all get along singing “Kumbaya.”

Following the Jesus of Scripture – and not a Jesus who has been molded by the whims and liberal agendas of society – means that we need to do three things: (I know I am hitting you with a lot of numbers here today – but this is SO important.)

1. Seek Him and Call on Him - trusting in Him. Jesus says that He will be with us, always. He will give us the words to answer questions, the tough questions when someone puts them to you. He said, *“do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”* (Luke 12:11-12)
2. Submit to Jesus and Surrender your will to Him - *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* (John 3:16) The invitation is given to everyone – but not everyone accepts because it does not fit in with their needs – or their agenda.
3. Share your faith in Him – make our faith in Him public – Jesus said, *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 10:32-33)

Jesus gave us the sad truth - that not everyone will get to heaven, and even more sad that not everyone WANTS to go to heaven. There are some who outwardly refuse. And then there are

those who only want it on their terms. It has to be on God's terms – and not ours! Let's look at the overwhelming evidence:

In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish"* It makes people uncomfortable because they have to change – they have to be open to be transformed and turn away from something, or a behavior they love to do – or that they are hooked on.

In Matthew 18:3 Jesus told His disciples, *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* Some people refuse to change and say Jesus loves me just the way I am. You know what – that is true – but He loves you too much to leave you that way! His transforming love is what He wants to give you – to draw you to Himself.

The Apostle John warned us about skeptics who would present false evidence against Jesus. In 1 John 5:10-12 he writes, *"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."* I stand before you today, testifying that I am not ashamed of the Gospel, and I believe that Jesus is the Son of God – *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."* (Luke 13:35) Those are words that Jesus spoke today – words from the Prophet Jeremiah. I love how that phrase is spoken in Hebrew: *"Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai."* Adonai means Lord.

It is so difficult to think that there are people who might be just going through the motions – saying that they are a believer, but instead are living a life that says just the opposite. Today is the day, and now is the time for each one of us to pray that their eyes and hearts would be opened, that they would freely give themselves in submission to our Lord Jesus Christ; *"To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions."* (Titus 1:15-16)

Jesus' third point is this: Do not wait too long – before it's too late! Going to church is not enough; being sincere is not enough; being a good person is not enough; being religious is not enough! Following is not submitting. Look at Jesus' words from today's Gospel, Luke 13:25-27 *"Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!"* There were people who had been following Jesus, eating with Him, listening to Him, but may not have really heard what He said – or it had no impact on them. Who knows, it might have been the popular thing to do, following the one who claimed to be the Messiah – and they thought they would be covered just by association. Sadly, I believe, there is that kind attitude in many churches today!

Jesus longed to have the Jewish people come to Him, and call Him Lord, but sadly many did not. His word from today's Holy Gospel speak volumes, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'*" He is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem that would take place, and the scattering of the Jewish people, away from Jerusalem and Israel, seeing the fulfillment of the words from Jeremiah "*But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the LORD.*" (Jeremiah 12:17) Jesus uses the words from Psalm 118:26 to say He awaits them to acknowledge His Lordship "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.*" Indeed, we who gather here today to worship and praise Him – acknowledge His Lordship as Adonai; "*Baruch Haba Beshem Adonai.*" Do you know that during the Sanctus – Anne will be playing "Holy, Holy, Holy" and the last words of that are "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord." He will return one day from where He left – as the angel told the Apostles just after Jesus ascended to the Father from the Mount of Olives, "*Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1:11) "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.*" (Luke 13:35)