

MIDWEEK ADVENT III GAUDETE

Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

We are promised that when our LORD returns He will reveal things hidden in the darkness and make known the counsels of the hearts of men. Yet, I submit, that while we are Christians who look forward to our LORD's promised return, we may not really be all that excited about things being revealed we know to be hidden in the darkness, even if we may have been successful in falsely convincing ourselves that our hearts are pure and we are, in fact, not full of darkness but full of light.

That is because in truth we know differently. We know that out of the human heart proceeds all kinds of evil. JESUS, Himself, tells us: *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."* All of these things are done and hidden in the darkness and every one of them our LORD promises to reveal.

That is the character of the Light of CHRIST. He is the Light of the world. A Light no darkness can overcome. In Him, all things that are hidden will be made known. All those things that you have desired to hide, all those things of which you are ashamed, everything that you hoped your mother, your spouse, your children, your friends, your neighbors, would never come to know, God already knows, and they will be revealed.

You see, you can fool other people. You can fool your loved ones. Some of you may even be successful at fooling yourself. But you cannot fool God and He will not be mocked. All the deeds that you do in the darkness thinking that no one can see them or know of them, are seen and known by God, and when He returns to be your judge on that great and final Day, every one of those deeds will be brought out of the darkness and into the Light.

Perhaps that is why you have never sought private or individual confession and absolution from your pastor. Perhaps you have fooled yourself into believing that no one knows about your darkest thoughts, your evil motives, your sin. Perhaps you are afraid to reveal your particular sins in an intimate way to your pastor because deep down inside you feel that if you do not talk about them, if you do not acknowledge them, then you can act as though they never really happened.

But when they come back to you, troubling your mind and spirit, causing doubt, self-loathing, and despair; when the shame wells up inside of you, because of what you have done or left undone, when your heart aches because of your sins of thought, word, and deed, where do you go? To whom do you turn? When CHRIST returns and brings to light things hidden in darkness, when He shines His Light on the counsels of your heart what will be revealed? What will He see?

But dearly beloved of CHRIST, do you not know that confession is not for judgment as though you are confessing to a worldly court whose judge will in turn meet out appropriate punishment? In fact, the judgment has already occurred for all believers. It happened on a dark Friday nearly 2000 years ago where your punishment was laid upon the Judge who has, in turn pronounced you righteous, innocent, blessed.

So you see, confession is not for judgment, it is, instead, for the pronouncement of God's grace, His love, His mercy. It is for His Word of Absolution, and to bring you peace because your sins have been removed—forgiven—to be remembered God no more.

For this reason our LORD has sent unto us those who go before His face *“to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God whereby the Dayspring from high hath visited us; To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (The Benedictus). JESUS has sent His pastors, His teachers, and His prophets to minister to you; to lead you out of the valley of the shadow of death that you may recline with Him beside still waters in quiet pastures, in the Light of His peace.

JESUS has sent them to declare that He is *“the Light of the world,”* that whoever follows Him will *“not walk in darkness, but have the Light of life.”* Their message is one of peace in CHRIST JESUS. They teach in order that you find *“out what is acceptable to the LORD. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done... in secret.”* They say to you, *“Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And CHRIST will give you light.”* They are to return us daily to our Baptism where we died with CHRIST and were raised again, new creations, from the darkness of death to Light of life eternal. They are to strengthen us with His Flesh and Blood and preach His Word of forgiveness.

For our FATHER *“has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the SON of His love....”* Therefore, *“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.”* You have nothing to fear. The darkness of this world and our own sinful hearts cannot and will not prevail. JESUS has come. JESUS is returning. The SUN is rising with healing in His wings. In His Light all

things will be revealed and no darkness shall remain. What will His Light reveal about you? That you are a child of the Light. Forgiven, renewed, restored.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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