

Sermon for the Feast of the Reformation

"We played the flute, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

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It is written: 'Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Zion.'

And attend, 'for the testimony of God is faithful, giving wisdom to children.'

Therefore listen in fear, and contemplate in trembling, for 'out of the mouths of babes and infants the LORD has established glory before your foes.'

Indeed, the foes of the church are manifold, its enemies are beyond number; sedition flows in its vanes as leprosy; corruption in its clergy as a cancer; and senselessness as the lead of a bullet through its brain.

Who is so ignorant as to not see that the church is corrupt? Who is so blind as to not see that she falters? From without, the culture passes endless judgment against it, as medieval, stupid, superstitious; and those within have not courage to fight back, for their heart beats blackened blood.

Some attempt to save the Church by rationalizing it. But they only diminish the Faith of the Church, for the Faith is not in need of reason, but is the completion of reason.

Some attempt to save the Church by accommodating it to the spirit of the age; but they only make our eternal faith temporal; for the spirit of the age dies with the age; but the Holy Spirit of God reigns unto the ages of ages.

Some protest the Church and leave her in her poverty, poverty of morals, poverty of thought. They forsake the Church, and forsake the Prophet, saying *'He has a demon.'* They forsake the Christ saying, *'A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'*

The Church is stricken in poverty, for when it was young, it heeded the command of our incarnate God: *'Give all you have to the poor, and follow me.'* Even as the Church heeded the command: *'Unless ye become as little children.'*

Indeed our mother the Church has given all she has to the poor; she has revealed the infinite riches of the reason of God and the mysteries of the faith to an unbelieving world. Indeed she has become as a little child, dismissed by generation upon generation of those who have lost their reason and become old, or perhaps become senile.

The voice of a child cries out *'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'*

The voice of the Church cries out, *'We proclaimed the grace of God, and you did not rejoice. We lamented the misery of man, and you did not cry.'*

What is this *'wicked and adulterous generation?'* Though they ever and always speak of the misery of mankind, they cannot weep. Though they seek after its redemption, they cannot find.

So the Church, as a mother longing for her wayward child, cries on behalf of fallen humanity. So the Church, as a child dances for Adam's redemption, rejoices on behalf of thankless mankind. This shall the Church always do. *'For heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall never pass away.'* And if the Word shall not pass, neither shall its ark, the Church, and neither shall its two cherubim, the holy laity and the consecrated clergy, who ever guard the revelation of the Lord; the revelation hidden in the ark; the ark, hidden in the tent, a tent of humility.

It is the Feast of the Reformation, and it is a celebration of nothing more than this, that God shall forever sustain His Church, through every corruption, through every assault, through every adversity, that *'though in the eyes of the unrighteous, it will seem to have died, yet it shall be in peace.'*

This age is no darker than the age wherein salvation was traded for silver, and a monk who owned not his own cloak alone raised the cross against it.

This age is no brighter than the age wherein the light of the Gospel shined with such ferocity that all Christendom was blinded by its splendor.

For this age and that are but one age, the age of the Church, the age of Holy Cross, the Age of the War of St. Michael against the devils, the age of the Saints, the age of the perfect man crucified upon a tree by sinful men.

In this day we commemorate an age of everlasting crucifixion, of Christ, and of the Church. Why then do we call it a Feast? Why then do we rejoice?

It is simple, dear Christian. *This generation* suffers as all have, and their life is an unending lamentation. But the Church suffers, and *'counts even this suffering as joy.'* [*For wisdom is justified by her works.*]

For *'there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.'* A river of water, and of blood; a river which flows from a perfect man, upon an ever blessed tree. *'The nations rage, the kingdoms totter, but at the utterance of the voice of God, the earth melts.'*

Therefore, you who endure the sufferings of this passing age with rejoicing, *'fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.'* For *'the Lord of hosts is with us.'*

'Selah.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Revelation 14:6-7; Romans 3:19-28; Matthew 11:12-19.