

April 24–25, 2010 / Jubilate
John 16:16-22
“Come and See the Awesome Works of Our God”

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. **“Come and see the awesome works of God,”** invites the Psalmist. They are the cause of joyful shouts, singing, and praise.

He has turned the sea to dry ground. This defines all the works of the Lord. For first of all, He is the God who delivered us out of slavery, the God who provides the promise, the crushing of our enemy's skull, before the consequence and curse. The Lord has intervened on our behalf. He has thrown horse and rider into the sea. He has marked us with the blood of His Lamb so that the angel of death passes over us. He has turned the sea to dry ground.

But that is not all. There are other works of God toward men. He has also brought us into the net. He has laid affliction on our backs. We go through fire and through water. This is also the Lord's doing toward us. He breaks us. He exposes us. He accuses and even kills us.

Because we are sinners. We are selfish, resentful, hateful, petty, and proud. We are surrounded by beautiful wives, without a care in the world, and cast our eyes with lust and greed upon the one who belongs to Uriah. We are surrounded by delicious and interesting food in the plush vitality of paradise, without any hunger or need, and we look upon the single tree, the unworthy and seductive fruit, and though it means the loss of all we love, the torture of animals, plants, and even the earth, the sorrow and death of our children, the partial-loss of God's image and the perversion of marital intimacy and companionship, even though it means our own death, we look with lust and greed upon the forbidden fruit and we take it.

We do not need to sin. We can overcome it. We are not simply weak victims. The devil does not make us do it. Rather, we are

evil. We choose it. We crush our consciences. Do not make excuses. Do not pretend to be ignorant. Like Adam and David you have chosen sin without need or any extenuating circumstance. You have rebelled against God and dared Him to notice or act against you. You have been stupid with lust and pride, taken huge risks, without care for what would happen to you or those you love if you were caught. Repent.

This is the net the Lord has brought you to. This is the affliction He lays upon your back. Repent, but do not despair. Rather, as the Psalmist says, “**rejoice.**” See the effects of the Law on your life, your illnesses, your divorce, your child support payments, indebtedness, funerals, loneliness, and so forth, and praise God for all of them. For He loves you too much to leave you on your own. He breaks you, exposes you, and even kills you. But this He does, as He does all things, in perfect mercy. He does not do this for His benefit or from some perverse enjoyment, but He does this for your benefit, out of your need, lest you fall away, that He might bring you life again.

Even as He has led you into the Law's net, so also, He has brought you to rich fulfillment, out of slavery, out of death. He keeps your soul among the living. He does not allow your feet to be moved. He hears your prayers. He is merciful. He is good. This is the foundation of all our praise, the reason we are bold to pray at all, the strength of our faith and the essence of our hope. Yes, we are sinners, unworthy of God's grace in Jesus Christ, but He is steadfast in His love. We do not praise God because we are good but because He is good. He does not love us because we deserve it, but because He has made a Promise. He is not stopped by our sin. He loves us and forgives us and counts us as His own perfect, undefiled, immaculate Bride.

Our Lord prophesies on the night in which He was betrayed that we will have sorrow. Our hour has not yet come. We must yet endure the chaos of a broken world. We must wait until the last saint, the elect of God, is sealed in the waters of Holy Baptism and creation's anticipatory groaning is brought to an end. But our

sorrows will turn to joy, in a little while, in our resurrections like unto His Resurrection, at some near, but imprecise point in the future, we will see Jesus. Our hearts will rejoice. No one will take our joy from us and all our sorrow will cease. For the Lord Jesus Christ did not abandon His disciples in laying down His life. He was taken from them for a little while, and they had terrible sorrows until the third day and the revelation of His victory over death and the fulfillment of all the Scriptures, but He did not abandon them. Rather He served them. He went away for their good, to provide what they most needed: reconciliation with the Father, righteousness won through Hell's worst punishment.

There is a sense in which even your sorrows, in Christ, are a cause for joy, for hope. Not simply because the Lord works all things together for good, which He does, but because your sorrows show your dissatisfaction with this world, that you do not belong here. Nothing here can ever satisfy you because everything here, no matter how good it is, is always broken, always tainted with sin. You are sorrowful because you long to be with your Shepherd, to be free, not only of the sins of others, but also of your own sin and temptation. Your sorrows demonstrate that you belong to Jesus, that this is not your home. They also show that the Word of the Lord is true. He said you would have sorrows and you do. Your sorrows also show how the Lord provides. For the Lord Jesus only eats with and receives sinners. It is only the sick who need the Physician. It is only the sorrowful who need the comfort of the Holy Spirit. You need Jesus and Jesus provides. And finally, your sorrows bring you into the way of the cross, into the way of Jesus. Faith sees these things and confesses against them, like standing in the cemetery and saying, **“O grave, where is thy victory?”** In the midst of evil, in the midst of sorrow, faith says, **“The Lord is good and works all things together for good.”**

The Law shines light upon our errors - our ever-seeking after pleasures of the flesh, control of our lives, or security in this world, and because we belong to Jesus, because we are baptized, we do not reject the light and slink back into the darkness. But we

confess. We repent. We wait for the mercy of the Lord to make Himself known.

Come see what the Law has done to us, the work of the Lord toward us. Come and see our disease, and rejoice. *For when can liars ever be trusted?* When they say, **‘I am a liar.’** This is how it is with our confession. It pleases God because it is true. We say, **“I am a liar. I am a sinner. I am man of unclean lips.”** And the angels in heaven say, **“Amen,”** and rejoice. Not only because we have told the truth, but also because the holy angels rejoice over every sinner who repents.

The Lord shines that light, His holy Law, in mercy. He shines it that we would return to the way of righteousness, that we would repent. Thus do we pray that the Lord would grant to all of us, who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion by grace, who have received the forgiveness of all our sins and are declared holy by Christ, the power to avoid those things that are contrary to our faith and follow such things that are good, which is to say, the things that the Law of the Lord has shown us are good.

Yes, we are sinners. We have sorrows. Our lives are broken. It is our fault, our own, most grievous fault. But so too do we have hope. The Lord turned the sea to dry ground, death to life, sorrow to joy. Jesus lives. Death is dead. Hell has no power over us or claim upon us. Jesus lives and there is no one left to accuse us. Your works, your life, your faith are pleasing to God. You are the cause of angelic rejoicing. In a little while, your sorrows will end. The Lord will complete the good work He has begun in you. You will rise from the dead, free of the old man and all temptation. You will be like the Lord. You will be as you were always meant to be, as Jesus has already declared you to be: righteous, holy, innocent, without shame, beloved of the Lord.

Rejoice. Jesus lives. Your sins are forgiven. In ✠ Jesus' Name. Amen.