

## God Will Establish the Work of our Hands

Psalm 90:17, Trinity Sunday XVIII

Mission Festival, October 4, 2015

Sermon Text, Psalm 90:17 (KJV):

***“And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”***

Beloved of the Lord.....Every Christian knows that God’s will for us is to be witnesses of Christ in this world. We are to share Christ with others, speak God’s saving Word to others, for it is God’s will that all be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. Likewise from the faith that God has planted in each believing heart, we really do want all our friends and loved ones, and especially family, to be true Christians who know and love the Lord by faith, for we know the certain love of Christ and we also know that if they die in unbelief, they will be lost to eternal damnation. Jesus Himself said “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” We all then have the good will to spread and share God’s Word, “but how to perform that which is good I find not.” We have many fears and worries regarding witnessing and from these fears we often fail. Or when we open our mouth and speak, we worry we said it wrong or didn’t say it right.

But when this happens we should all remember what the Apostle Paul said in First Corinthians three. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.” Today’s text was thus chosen so we understand God Himself establishes the work of our hands, namely the Holy Spirit Himself is active and working when we speak God’s Word to others therefore we need not fear, but should simply speak and have faith. However poorly we may speak God’s Word, this witnessing, this work really is God’s work and not our own....”Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.” And.....

I. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us! These are the words of the prophet Moses in Psalm 90, written over a thousand years before Christ was born. Yet Moses knew Jesus. In John 5 when Jesus spoke to the Jews who trusted they had kept Moses’ law, Jesus said to them, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for [Moses] wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” Moses did write about Jesus, every time Moses spoke or wrote about God’s mercy, grace, and salvation. Moses knew Jesus and Jesus knew Moses, and long after Moses died on earth, Jesus spoke with the living Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, where the face of Christ “did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”

But why is it important for us to know that Moses wrote of Jesus? Because Moses prayed “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.” Moses here speaks of Christ. The beauty of Christ is His grace and mercy, forgiveness for all sinners by way of the cross. This salvation cannot be earned by our works or labor, but such forgiveness can only be received, believed by faith. Yet the reason men do not see the Lord’s beauty is because men believe themselves beautiful at heart. In other words, though all men spiritually are ugly and naked in God’s sight by way of sin, and all men have a conscience which tells them of their sin, all men also try to beautify themselves by

their good works before God, in the hopes they can reach heaven. Let's take the pope for example. It is no accident that the pope is dressed in white with gold accents. We are to believe he is a holier man than we. The past couple of weeks we have been bombarded with all the good this pope is doing, driving not a limousine but a Fiat, visiting the poor and such. Very impressive right? But Jesus spoke of the pope and those like him in John 5:44, and Matthew 23:27-28. Jesus said "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only?" A true believer seeks the honor of God alone because God came to save them from sin by the cross. Jesus also said of the pope and those like him, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

The point of all this is that neither the pope, nor we, nor *any* person on earth can be holy in God's sight by our works, for we are all ugly in God's sight by way of sin. And however beautiful or handsome a woman or man may be on the outside, on the inside we are filled with sin and iniquity, and our conscience bears witness daily to our sins. Nor can we make ourselves clean or wash our sins away, nor undo the evil in life we have done. Nor are we more holy or less holy than the pope because God condemns us all in Romans three, "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.... Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." These verses are a death sentence from God to every soul who thinks by their good works they can make it to heaven. God sees and knows every sin of our heart and God counts us all guilty, and justly so, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Yet there is a way, a path to heaven, but this path begins from above and comes down first, before ascending up again into heaven. This is why Jesus said, "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here then in Christ Jesus we find "the beauty of the Lord", and it is by faith alone this "beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Saving faith is something like an invisible hand that puts clothes upon naked Adam and Eve. When Christ and His cross is preached, we who are ugly in our sin see the beauty of Christ in that He earnestly came to save us from sin. Jesus died relatively naked upon the cross, yet by this sacrifice of His body and blood, Jesus has provided clothing for all the world, a perfect covering for all sin. Jesus calls this a wedding garment, like the white dress of a bride, or the tuxedo of a man. Believers in heaven are spoken of in this way, namely "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Therefore....

II. We have the promise, that God establishes the work of our hands. Knowing that God has clothed us with His grace, namely He has covered our nakedness of sin, with the holiness of Christ, we can be certain also by the Spirit which He sent us, God will help us to speak and share His Word with others. So it is written and so we pray "Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Here we are certainly taught to pray God will bless and establish the work of our hands, which includes mission work, witnessing by the words of our mouths. "For God hath not given us the spirit of

fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” If then you have prayed that God will help you to be a faithful witness, and to speak His Word rightly, you need to believe also He will help you to do it! So also it is written “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

When we pray and thus trust the very beauty of Christ is upon us by faith, we can be certain also that God will establish, namely bless our work, not only the labor of our hands, but even the words of our mouth spoken. Our God is not the kind and type of God that converts us but then walks away saying, “You’re now on your own, and let’s meet up later in heaven.” He doesn’t tell us to cross our fingers and hope for the best! Rather Jesus promises to be with us always in all trials and tribulations, and He has also promised to send us His Spirit. In John 14 Jesus said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Though we may not feel God’s presence, God is with us always in both Body and Spirit, and no matter how weak or frail or poor we may be in speaking God’s Word, the Holy Spirit is still busy, active, and hard at work when we speak ether the Law or the Gospel to our neighbor. The Gospel of Jesus Christ alone has the power to convert the heart of every sinner who truly repents and does not stubbornly resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether once a militant Muslim, Catholic pope, or the most wicked ruler, *ALL* who have been converted may rightly fall to their knees, praying “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

And truly this is what the Lord has done to us in our own lives, so we are humbled by God’s love and mercy upon us. And that same love daily works within our hearts so we sincerely desire the salvation of family and friends. And let it be said, even if they reject your words which are God’s Words today, that doesn’t mean it will be the same tomorrow, or at the end of their life. Maybe later they will hear, for you may plant but another may water. Do not be discouraged, but learn instead to be more bold. Do not fear either what the hardened sinner might think of you, or how it might put a strain on your relationship, for if you were in their shews, wouldn’t you want someone to be bold to you and speak the truth to you without fear, for your own salvation? Be bold then for Christ’s sake and say what you know you ought to say for the salvation of their soul. Do not let your fear be your guide and compass, for God has not given you the spirit of fear but of power! Don’t stifle the Holy Spirit which wants to speak through you but let the Spirit speak and say your peace. Have faith that though you are a poor and stumbling and fumbling sinner, just like your pastor, God is so good and great and gracious, He can take your poor mouth and give you good words to speak to God’s honor and glory. Remember also Jesus said in Mark 13:11.....“But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

Finally beloved of the Lord, don’t worry either about the fruits, for that is God’s business and work, not your own. The working and manner of the Spirit in this world is a mystery which we cannot see with the eyes, but we know by faith He is there, because “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” And aren’t you living proof of that, dear believer? Weren’t you also once lost but now found, didn’t God the Good Shepherd seek you out and find you? If God has delivered you out of Satan’s kingdom by those Christians who brought you to Baptism, or if God has found you by other Christians who brought God’s Word to you through

preaching so you were converted as an adult, surely God can work the same through your towards someone else now, not by your power, but the great and saving power of His Word! And even if you speak His Word weakly, that Word itself is still strong for it carries its own power, “the power of God unto salvation.” Therefore speak God’s Word without fear, and be strong, “let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.” Amen.

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