

August 23, 2015  
Isaiah 29:11-19

Proper 16B  
The Ransom is Paid

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Wealthy Argentinian Grain traders and brothers Juan and Jorge Born were kidnapped in 1974 by the far left terrorist group Montoneros. Nine months later they were released after a ransom of \$60 million was paid. At this point it was the largest known ransom that has been paid via monetary amounts.

A ransom being paid is one of the most gracious things a person or group of people could do for someone that's been kidnapped, as long as the victim comes out alive. As we look to our text this morning we heard these words: <sup>19</sup> *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.* <sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew Word *anawim* that is translated in this version as meek means a whole lot more than that. According to Martin Luther in his commentary on Isaiah he writes, "The Hebrew Word *anawim* means wretched, afflicted, and extremely unfortunate." The *anawim* shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, the poor shall exult the Holy One of Israel.

The question for this morning as we look at the second article of the creed is how do the *anawim* obtain fresh joy? It's when the eyes of the blind see and the ears of the deaf hear as we heard in verse 18 of our text.

You see, you and I, we were once blind, deaf, we were once the *anawim* because we were lost and imprisoned by our sin. We were held captive by Satan. There was no way we could escape his grasp. We were lost and condemned creatures. We were the *anawim*.

Aren't we still wretched, afflicted, and oftentimes extremely unfortunate? There are times that we are. You and I have experienced these things. Afflicted with disease. Afflicted with financial turmoil. Afflicted with the loss of a job. Afflicted with a bad crop. Afflicted with the habitual sin. Afflicted with injury. You and I as we confess are poor miserable sinners.

Isaiah is writing to the people of Israel as Jerusalem is going to be under siege. Jerusalem and her people are going to be afflicted, they are going to be the *anawim*. Aren't they already? They are lost and condemned as well. But we seem to be constantly under attack for the forces of evil. We constantly are being afflicted with many things because we live in a fallen and sinful world. But yet there is a promise, there is a promise of our ransom being paid. About how we shall see and hear and how we will obtain fresh joy in the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Is 29:19). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

What a promise it is! It's a promise that's already been fulfilled. If you remember, last week we looked at the first article of the creed and how God is a providing God. He is our creator God. He is the one that takes care of all of our needs. In the Garden of Eden something tragic happened. Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan, they were taken ransom, and along with them the rest of mankind. Adam and Eve were enslaved into sin and so are the rest of their children for the remainder of time. Yet God told them that He was going to send someone to crush the serpent's head.

That's exactly what happened with the person of Jesus Christ. He is embodiment of the promise fulfilled.

Jesus Christ is the ransom that needs to be paid for the Father to welcome back His creation. We confessed it today in the Luther's explanation of the Creed: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord,

who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

It didn't take sixty million dollars to purchase and win us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. It didn't take any amount of gold or silver. But the ransom that needed to be paid was His life. He purchased and won me with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He purchased and won you with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

In Isaiah He promises to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He promises to restore His people. He restores His people not only in bodies, but also in souls. He restores you as He pays your ransom with his body and life.

Martin Luther in one of His sermons on the Catechism drives home this point by saying: This article you always hear being explained, chiefly on Sundays: "Behold, your king!" and the like. Therefore you may believe in Jesus, that he has become your Lord, that is that he redeemed you from death, sin, and set you on his lap. Thus, I have rightly said that the first article teaches about Creation, and the second concerning liberation; etc. For when we were created, the devil deceived us and was made our lord. Now, Christ frees us from death, devil, sins and gives us righteousness, life, faith, power, salvation, wisdom, etc. Because of this article we are called Christians. For those who acknowledge and call upon Christ are called Christians."

The ransom that's been paid does a whole lot more for us. Thomas Wengert in his book *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith* says this: Moreover, the means of payment ("his holy, precious blood ... and innocent suffering and death") destroys the enemies that hold us captive ("sin ... death ... the power of the devil"). But it also frees

us from the curse of the law, for here weakness (“blood ... and ... death”) is under no law (“innocent,” which in German is *unschuldig*—something not owed to God).<sup>2</sup>

The one who rescues us, in this case Jesus Christ, now owns us. He has purchased us and frees us to serve. Wengert adds these words: We, too, are no longer under the law and its eternal “ought” but under grace and now serve not because we must but because we are freed to do it. The proof of this triumph over our kidnapping enemies is, as always for Luther, the resurrection, through which Christ “lives and rules.”<sup>3</sup>

When we serve God, which is part of our act of stewardship, we serve Him because the gospel frees us to do it. It’s what we confessed in the meaning of the creed: “that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,

just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.”

You see because Christ has paid for me, I am not my own, I am not even the worlds. I cost him His life. It goes for you as well, Christ paid for you. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. You cost Christ his very life. You are son of the King. You are a daughter of the King. As a son or daughter of the king you have so many privileges, so many honors and endowments. You have a rich inheritance.

You also yield to Him your heart, your love, your life. You give back to your king, because you are now His. Gerberding in his 1910 Lutheran Catechist writes this: “And serve. Serve Him. I am redeemed not merely that I might keep out of hell.” Surely God did purchase you to keep you out of hell, since He does not desire the death of a sinner. Gerberding goes on: “not that I might selfishly enjoy the fruits of redemption, not that I should be satisfied that I get to heaven. No, no! Such a selfish religion is unworthy of one redeemed at such a cost. Such selfishness is a shame and disgrace.” Keeping heaven to myself is not the reason I was redeemed.

He goes on: “I am redeemed to serve; to serve Him; to serve in righteousness—a holy service. In innocence—a pure and upright service. In blessedness—a glad, and happy service. Everlastingly—an endless service”

Christ has redeemed you to save your soul. Christ has redeemed you so that you may have fresh joy. Christ has redeemed you so that you can have fresh joy in service to Him. The ransom that was paid for you means that you are free to serve your King, the

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<sup>2</sup> Wengert, T. J. (2009). *Martin Luther’s Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (p. 58). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

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King that created you, the King that redeems and liberates you from sin, death, and the evil tryant the devil.

You are free to serve Christ in all that you do, in all vocations of your life. You are free to serve Christ in your vocation as disciple, your vocation as husband or wife, mother or father, son or daughter, farmer, teacher, nurse, friend, grandparent, elder, usher, council member, lay person, pastor. You are free to serve Christ because He won for you salvation.

You are free to serve Christ with all of life's resources, because Christ has paid your ransom.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and our Savior. Amen.*