

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, November 19, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Shorted and Cheated”

READING: Isaiah 30:8-11-13, 15 – Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord’s instruction. They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!” Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: “Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant.” This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and thrust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”

Back in October, Becky and I spent a week in Appleton, Wisconsin, visiting our eldest son Andy and his family. We had a wonderful time, and we had wonderful weather: warm sunshine, a high blue sky, and cool breezes. It was so nice; I decided one day to go fishing in the Fox River at a lock and dam I had discovered last year. I bought a one-day fishing license and I went to a Kwik-Trip gas station to buy some bait. They have a cooler there with live nightcrawlers and other worms and grubs. I bought a Styrofoam container that contained a dozen nightcrawlers, or so it said.

I drove to the lock and dam and went to work. I set up one rod with a bobber and a sinker, put on a nice fat nightcrawler, and tossed it out into the river. Then I took my other rod and went along the embankment casting a jig and crawler. I had several bites that robbed me of a ‘crawler, and I caught one lone freshwater drum. When I rebaited my hook, I had to dig around quite a bit in the container to find what I knew to be my fifth nightcrawler. After I baited up and tossed it back into the water, I thought to myself, “Boy, I sure had to hunt for that last one. Where are the other seven ‘crawlers?” I dug around in the container without success. Then I started to shake out the dirt. By the time the container was empty of dirt I had already come to the realization that I had been cheated! Instead of a dozen nightcrawlers, I had received only five! They had shorted me by more than half! It angered me. I thought, “I’ll have to go back there and make complaint!”

In the entire book of Isaiah, Yahweh makes complaint through his prophet of how Israel is shorting and cheating him. Our text is just one example of his lament and his charges. Israel had fallen into a pattern. They offered up the appropriate sacrifices, paid lip service to Yahweh in worship and prayer, but then failed to live lives in obedience to his law. They cheated, abused, and mistreated the poorer people of the land. They committed adultery, stole, lied, defamed, betrayed, and falsely accused one another. They practiced idolatry with the gods of their enemies and the cultures around them. They acted uprightly in public, but in secret they practiced divination and all manner of vices. And when the Lord sent his prophets to them, they dismissed them, turned away from them, or even did violence to them. They were shorting God of what they owed him for all he had done for Israel. They were cheating him of the praise, the trust, and the love that should have been his. They were giving those things away to false gods or just spending it all on their own luxuries and pleasure. They were ignoring Yahweh and treating him with disrespect.

Is it any less so in our day? Lots of people live their lives without much thought about God. Oh, they may use his name in vain. They may send a quick prayer his way when danger or trouble overtakes them. But on a day-to-day basis they live as though he does not exist. They have nothing in their hearts for him. They

live for their own leisure, their own pleasures. They break his commandments as it suits them. They pursue all manner of false gods, most especially the false god of “self”.

And even those who label themselves “Christians” do not much pay attention to what his Word says. They are swayed by the culture around them. They try to “keep up with the Joneses.” They do what “feels” right, no matter what God’s word has to say. They short God of the obedience due him. They cheat him of the thanks and praise that are rightfully his.

Let that not be said about us. As Thanksgiving Day comes ever closer, let us be the people who rightly give him our thanks and praise. Let us do our best to walk in his ways and to seek his will. Let us never cheat him of what is rightfully his, nor short him of our devotion. May he be our great Treasure and our great Light through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER:

P.S. When my last worm was gone, I put all my tackle into my car. Then I walked across the street to the “Down the Hill Tavern” and enjoyed a “Lutheran lemonade.” That helped take away the sting of being shorted and cheated!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1) **VOTERS ASSEMBLY** – Sunday, November 24, after late service, we will have a Congregational Assembly with the principle work of looking at, amending, and approving the Work Plan for 2025. Changes are coming in that year, so careful and thoughtful planning for various contingencies are called for. Please make an effort to attend. Lunch will be provided.

2) **SEMINARIAN JOSH BIERI** will be here the weekend of November 23-24. He will be the preacher at all three weekend services. Josh and his family have been the recipients of our financial assistance these past two years as he prepares for vicarage next year and ordination beyond. We can look forward to his message and to seeing his wife and at least their little son who will be a year older than when we last saw him.

3) **THANKSGIVING SERVICE** – 7:00 PM on Wednesday, November 27. My last Thanksgiving sermon at Grace (probably).