**“Scarcely Saved”**

Acts 1:1-26

1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

Ascension / Easter 7

Quoted in 1st Peter: “’If the righteous is **scarcely saved**, **what will become of** the ungodly and the sinner?’. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Christ is now **ascended**! Alleluia! Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

This is absolutely the **strangest** (and **most unique**) weekend / week / 10 days of the Church Year. We don’t really know what to **call** this weekend (after the Ascension or the 7th Sunday of Easter) none of these are great **titles**. We’re not in the Easter **Season** anymore, and Pentecost is ahead but **not yet** (historically remembered).

We’re in “**limbo**” sort of. I described it last week as our “**twiddling of our thumbs**” **weekend** … so we **wait** … and, maybe, remember **what this is all about**.

**Text**

This has been about the potential salvation of the world, and even with the bloodshed of Christ, still there exists this Proverb Peter quoted that “if the righteous is **scarcely saved**, **what will become of** the ungodly and the sinner?” It’s tempting to come off of Easter and think **the whole world’s fine now** and **God will universally receive pagans and Christians (marginal or devoted) alike into the better place of Heaven once this life’s over**, that struggles here and now **aren’t struggles for “Good people”**.

And “**God has gone up”** as our bulletin illustration reminds us, so He’s not noticeably looking over shoulders in a fleshly form, judging and expecting of us and, even, talking to us with specific words not subject to individual’s opinions about them (or interpretation as it’s called), so is thought, often, a **distant idea** who **set potential blessings in motion then left**. We might be on our own for morality we might think, so what’s “right for you” is more credible than “what’s right”. **Orphans by despair or independents** we can feel like we are, so **forget what “got us here” and “what that means for our future” … or today**.

The first Church, after Jesus’ Easter resurrection then Ascension, had some claims on that momentary “**orphan**” **idea**. It lasted just over a week, but they **legitimately** had time to “**stew**” or “**cogitate**” or “**vacillate**” or “**make assumptions**” or “**humanly translate**” or (in some respects) **role their own unguided religion**. They **had to** **consider** the Lord’s “restoration of Israel” notion that they’d asked Him about and Judas’ “wickedness” and betrayal (fickleness, maybe, that birthed the rest) and decisions about the number 11 or 12 in core apostleship quotas or leadership in general. And they felt possibly more **independent** than people these days may ever.

In one sense, they were **empowered** by what they saw … but **confused**. They didn’t have Holy Spirit inspired Epistles to **preach** and a **tying of “loose ends” together** that Pentecost would start. But they **were human**, with every human influence and understanding capacity and limitation any of us would have.

I wonder if they **felt** “**scarcely saved**”, or wondered about **being “saved” at all**, or if **everyone was**. I wonder if they thought their **futures would be easy**. I wonder if they thought **that in-between week was the last week anyone would ever have to wonder about anything at all**.

It’s a **mature way to think of ourself** as “**scarcely** saved”. **Without personal pretense**, we’re **hopeful** and **thankful for hope at best**, confident **only Christ Jesus and in nothing else**, **barely** (again, “**scarcely**”) connected to “righteousness” **but by** **the “skin of our teeth” only**, and **that** “**teeth’s skin**” is **Jesus and promises** and **we beg for those promises to remain about us**.

If you’re with me so far, then the instructions of 1st Peter’s chapter 5 will make sense: “**Humble yourselves, therefore**”. I choose not to move quickly beyond this point, because Scripture doesn’t until people are there: **HUMBLED**. It’s from **there** that the rest of the story gains eternal meaning. From humility there is either **despair that one will not let even the best of news’ change** or **the JOY of being promised a “scarcely” rendered “salvation”** … it’s the potential of **repentance** without using the big word.

Once there comes the **craziest notions called “absolution”** (or **forgiveness** with a much more meaningful word attached to it), the **“setting free” of the “imprisoned”**. It’s **that** which this 1st Peter text tells us of. It’s **that** which we’re offered to consider and **ENJOY** when we think we, **really** and **significantly** and **eternally**, have nothing **OTHER**.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, **under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time HE MAY EXALT YOU, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you**.”

**Application**

This existence and life will **be tough**. “**Do not be surprised” (the text starts) “at the FIERY TRIAL when it comes upon you to test you, as though SOMETHING STRANGE were happening to you. But REJOICE insofar as YOU SHARE CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS**. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **Resist him**, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And” (and do please **GET THIS**:) “after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has” (even “**scarcely**” and **that still a wonderful saving thing** by not the “skin of **our teeth**” but, rather, but **the bloodshed of Jesus**) “called you to His eternal glory in Christ, **will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you**. To **HIM** **be** **the dominion**” (over **YOU** and all-that-is-in-this-life-and-then-onto-the-next **situations**) “**forever and ever**. Amen” … and **in Jesus’ name**.