**“Nation Set Apart”**

Exodus 19:2-8

Romans 5:6-15

Matthew 9:35—10:8 (9-20)

Pentecost 3

The song of saints in the throne room of Heaven (recorded in the book of Revelation, chapter 5): “Worthy are You (Lord Jesus) to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and **You have made them** a kingdom and priests to our God, and **they** shall reign on the earth.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

There is a **DUTY THAT WE HAVE being so blessed by God**. **Since** (Romans’ tells us) “while we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him by the death of His Son”, we not only “**rejoice in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation**”, but also **ARE** a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”. We’re “**sent out**” to the world that **we live in, to (in it) compassionately “proclaim that the kingdom of heaven that is at hand, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those unclean, and casting out demons**”. And that’s a **tall task**. It’s a **parental** task to the whole world. The **priesthood of God** is parenthood (fatherhood / motherhood) that’s given and must “**reign compassionately upon this earth**” and **be obvious in being a “nation” not just in the world, but set apart (which is what’s meant by the word “holy”)**. And being “set apart” can (and probably will) make of us targets of others not against that. The role (being so “set apart”, nor parenting in it) won’t (nor probably, should) be easy or comfortable. It will take (each moment we’re deliberately it) **having (and knowing that we have) God’s grace upon us and our jobs**, then a **commitment to it (a deliberateness)** with the **help of the Holy Spirit**, and (most often) **brothers and sisters (a brotherhood and sisterhood) with others of this nation**. It takes a **dependance upon God as Heavenly Father having adopted us as children of His** and a **willingness to move knowing Dad won’t fail us in that dependance**. It takes **duty** … and the will to **accept it as duty** and, then, **DO (or act upon it) as it’s expected of us to who are so duty-bound in and of that Nation that’s Holy and “set aside”**.

**Text**

God had just delivered that well-documented **Holy Nation (Israel)**. Exodus 19 comes “hot on the heels” of saving all of them within proximity of the saving Seed promised, and His Seed and them He saved from bondage so as to take them to the land of promise and sacrifice. One father of the millions in this nation (three or four generations downstream from Judah), bore that **Seed-of-sacrificial lineage** to Mount Sinai from Egypt **with two million gathered-close in tow**. And the **faithfulness of Him as the One in that Nation** had to be **named, then established**. One would need to **worthily** **answer the call of the Divine Father** to make **family membership ascribable in His name**.

In hindsight, we see Moses’ contemporary who (at the time) bore the sacrificial Savior’s Seed probably “**Pharzites**” … and God put the Nation’s challenge to **him (and them all)** through its **father-head** Moses: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall **be My treasured possession among all peoples**, for all the earth is mine; and you shall **be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**.” The answer to that gifted responsibility (together by that people / that nation) was “All that the Lord has spoken **we will do**” … or, at least, **One of us will**.

In commitment it was all who promised, but, in accomplishment, **One. Jesus** (from Judah’s line through Pharzites there at Mount Sinai). He’d **come to be obedient (“honorable”) to the Father’s voice and keep perfectly the Nation’s covenant**. **He (on behalf the rest, to share status with the rest)** would be the “**Treasured** **Possession successful among the Nation**” a **faithful “Priest” / head for it, making the rest that (Holy-also through Him, by His blood)**.

And **by that** **position in our made-to-be family Brother under the Heavenly Father**, we’re **duty bound also as brotherly disciples are**. Names of the twelve got recited in Matthew’s Gospel, and Jesus **sent those “named” out to “proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand in Him”**. **You** who are brothers and sisters / disciples of the Holy Nation by Jesus’ blood have received without paying; now **GIVE, which is the duty**.”

“Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts” Matthew **continues describing beyond what’s been already read**, “no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food” (and those who’ll receive you for the sake of your providing the gift of the Gospel will provide what’s needed). “And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, **let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town**.

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, **to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you**.”

**Application**

This is, of course, **Father’s Day weekend**. So, in **that role**, the **duty of the task** is (at least conceptually) **recognized**. **Fathers are** (even in **secular homes where this is not a Holy Nation topic**) **priests of households (as in compassionate to-be intercessors as reigning blest in the role by God), but set aside for the job ETERNAL (and not just civil) sent to do it (if Godly, proclaiming to family the nearness of the kingdom of God in Jesus)**. It’s a family headship first. The disciples were, first, sent to the household **of Israel** (like, for us, **our own household’s**) and it wasn’t until after that that they began to be sent (as faithful in the first task) also to the ends of the earth … **first to Jerusalem, then Judea**. Here **first** (in our Gospel account), they’re sent not to Gentiles or any Samaritan town, but **their own towns … their own families**. ….

**Fathers, tend to your own**. **Proclaim (with ETERNAL benefit) the kingdom of God to your own children and wife**. Wives and mothers, certainly pick up the slack where they don’t, but fathers, don’t make your wives have to “pick up your slack”. As Moses received from Israel the commitment: “all that the Lord has spoken we will do”, **you must commit** … then **follow your commitment with** **action that’s redeemed by the blood of the successful One, Jesus**. The **proof of fatherhood** is (as the expression goes): “**in the pudding”**. And you might be **persecuted in that** (by even your children) for exercising your priestly function **for God**, but persecution **FOR THAT CAUSE** is the **martyrdom to which you have been called**. “Honoring one’s father” demands that **fathers ARE** “**honorable**” … and that’s measured by **priestliness in the duty that’s given us by God**. So, I finish with a prayer for that, then, for fathers (and we pray):

“By the mystery of Your wisdom, O Lord, **many here are fathers**. You’ve given them a wife and a Christian marriage and home. For this and for the gift of children we thank You. Give to each strength to **set an example of the joy and privilege of fatherhood**. Help them so to arrange busy schedules and even leisure so that they may devote themselves to their loved ones, and families find sufficient time for work, **prayer**, and recreation together. Lord, where fathers have failed You in their role as priestly heads for a family, **forgive sins for Jesus’ sake**.

“Give courage to a father to follow Your will when torn and tried by tensions and temptations that are common to the duty. Grant wisdom to lead the family in the use regularly of the holiness of Your Word and Sacrament (the means that You’ve supplied for growth in faith, life, and usefulness to eternity). Bless employment and provide for all that’s necessary to meet physical and temporal needs. Give health in body, mind, and soul. By Your power help fathers to walk the road that leads to heaven through Jesus, leading their families to that safe and secure goal. For +Jesus’ sake and in His name, this we pray. Amen.”