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SERMON 19: PASSION SUNDAY

[Sermon] 1. *Whoever keeps my word will never taste eternal death.* John 8:52. A good gardener is duty bound to uproot a tree that does not produce fruit and throw it out of the garden, so it does not take up ground in vain. Hence Our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires like the good gardener that the tree of his garden, the Church militant, bears fruit and not be chopped down by the axe of eternal damnation, sets forth the proposed words, saying: *Whoever keeps my word*, etc. But because the tree first receives the influence of the sun's ray, then produces abundant fruit, and afterwards is diligently cared for so as not to perish; therefore, a fitting manner of proceeding is found in the proposed words: for first, the emanation of divine irradiation is noted, when it says: *my word*; second, the fruitfulness of good works, when it adds: *whoever keeps*; third, the evasion of eternal damnation, when it inserts: *will never taste eternal death*.

2. First, the emanation of the divine ray is noted when it says: *my word*. Just as a material tree is disposed to produce good fruits through the influence of solar rays, so too, a spiritual tree, that is the soul, is disposed through the emanation of the good and divine word in accord with all its powers to multiply works of sanctity and justice. In fact, the divine word first illuminates reason through understanding the truth of faith. Second, it inflames the concupiscible power through the benevolent charity of Christ. Third, it strengthens the irascible power through the perseverance of long-suffering hope. Indeed the soul

has these three things, namely, faith, charity and hope, which are necessary for salvation; the soul is thus exceedingly well disposed according to its powers to act well.

3. First, the divine word illuminates reason through understanding the truth of faith. Whence Psalm 118:130-131 says: *The declaration of your words illumines and gives understanding to the little ones. I opened my mouth and panted for I was longing for your commandments.* The person who wishes to be illuminated by the ray of the divine word must prepare and dispose oneself according to the example of David, who says: *I opened my mouth*,³³⁹ by invoking the divine name in prayer with the desire of observing the divine precepts; for there is no better preparation for the recognition of truth than the invocation of the divine name with the observance of these precepts; and *I panted*, by recollecting both the senses and exterior actions toward interior matters, because *the one whose actions are lessened will perceive wisdom*;³⁴⁰ and then the *declaration of your words*, by the proper words required for the exposition of divine eloquence, *illumines* whoever exteriorly hears; but it *gives to the little ones* the *understanding* required to diligently follow what is heard with reverence, but not to the proud ones, because the puffed-up mind is an obstacle to truth that "obscures, as it inflates" as Gregory says in *Moralia*.³⁴¹ John 8:31 speaks of this: *If you abide in my word, you will be my disciples indeed, and you will know the truth and the truth will liberate you*, that is, from the darkness of ignorance and blindness. Whence John 17:7 says: *Sanctify them in truth because your word is truth*.

³³⁹ See Ps 118:131.

³⁴⁰ See Sir 38:25.

³⁴¹ See Book XXIII, c. 17 n. 31 of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob* in CCSL cxliiib, 1167.

4. Second, the divine word inflames the concupiscible power through the benevolent charity of Christ. Whence Proverbs 30:5 states: *The word of God is a fiery shield for all hoping in divine mercy. It is, therefore, a fiery shield similar to a fire that does not diminish interiorly because of timid fear, and protects the entire body like a shield and breastplate, so it is not wounded exteriorly or assailed by diabolical temptation. Something like this is said in Hebrews 4:12: The word of God is alive and efficient, sharper than any two-edged sword, reaching even to the division of soul and spirit.*

5. Third, the divine word strengthens the irascible power through the perseverance of long-suffering hope. Whence Luke 6:47-48 says: *Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and acts upon them, I will show you what this one is like. This person is like the one building a home who dug deep and laid a foundation upon rock. When the flood came, the river struck the person's house and could not move it because it was founded on the rock. Everyone who comes to me "through faith"; and hears my words "with devotion"; and acts upon them by performing works; is like the one, that is, "Christ the mediator," building the home of the "Church," in the interlinear exposition; who dug deep and placed a foundation upon rock, namely, not on changeable things of the world but on the perpetual things of eternity.³⁴² Whence the Gloss: "The person who dug deep is the one who, secure in the precepts of humility, tears from the heart all earthly concerns, lest one waver in the service of God because of them and possess them as a lasting home." When the flood came, that is, "when persecution arises," the river struck, that is, carnal lewdness, the pleasure of the world and "instigation" of*

³⁴² The critical edition points to the Glossa Interlinearis on Luke 6:47-48.

demons; *the person's house*, that is, "the edifice of virtue," and *could not move it*, that is, "demolish." The reason is because it was founded on the rock, that is, Christ: "That which falls is not built on Christ."³⁴³ 2 Maccabees 15:11 says something similar to this: *So he armed every one of them, not with the defense of shield and spear, but with the best words.*

6. It follows: *Whoever keeps*, where the fruitfulness of good works is noted. By the influence of the divine word the soul is illuminated with the truth of faith, inflamed with the charity of Christ, and strengthened by long-suffering hope; therefore, it is exceedingly well disposed to observe the divine word whose observance produces the fruit of good works in great abundance. Given the threefold previously mentioned disposition from the influence of the divine word, it must be fruitful or observe the divine word in a threefold manner, which is the same as being fruitful through good works. First, since it is illuminated with the truth of faith, it must keep the divine word in purity of conscience by condemning the world. Second, since it is inflamed with the benevolent charity of Christ, it must keep the divine word with the full breadth of benevolence by loving God. Third, since it is strengthened by the perseverance of long-suffering hope, it must keep the divine word with firm patience by enduring evil.

7. First, since it is illuminated with the truth of faith, it must keep the divine word in purity of conscience by condemning the world. Whence John 17:6 says: *I have manifested my name to the people whom you have given me from the world; they were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.* The Word is Christ

³⁴³ The critical edition points to the Glossa Ordinaria on Luke 6:47-48.

who is saying to the Father: *I manifested your name to the people, the humble and the simple, what you have hidden from the prudent and the wise;*³⁴⁴ *whom you have given me from the world;*³⁴⁵ due to the conservation of purity and cleanliness, which a person is unable to conserve in this world, *for everything that is in the world, is either carnal concupiscence, that makes one impure or pleasure-seeking, or concupiscence of the eyes,*³⁴⁶ *that makes one covetous and avaricious, or proud of stature, that makes one pompous and ambitious. They were yours, through the grace of adoption; and you gave them to me, as disciples so that I might make known to them the way of eternal salvation. Whence God first adopts each one as a son and later gives the person over to Christ, as a disciple or to his vicar, to be instructed to condemn earthly things and seek after celestial things. Thus the apostles, because they were pure and immaculate due to the contempt of earthly things and an appetite for divine things, kept the divine word with a pure conscience without which the divine word cannot be kept.*

8. Second, since it is inflamed with the benevolent charity of Christ, it must keep the divine word with the full breadth of benevolence by loving God. Whence John 14:23 says: *If someone loves me, that person will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to that one and make our dwelling with him.* Since "The proof of divine love is shown in works,"³⁴⁷ it says: *If someone loves me, that person will keep my word.* This is like saying: my love is proved in works, because the "love of God does great things, if it is present; but if it refuses to

³⁴⁴ See Matt 11:25.

³⁴⁵ See John 17:6.

³⁴⁶ See John 2:16.

³⁴⁷ See Homily 30 n. 1 of GGHG in CCSL cxli, 256.

work, it is not the love of God;"³⁴⁸ *and my Father will love him, because my word is observed; for the graciousness of divine love or dilection is the fruit of human obedience or good works. And we will come to that one, in the reception of the sevenfold grace of God, and make our dwelling with him, through the multiplication and consummation of good works. Because of this Wisdom 6:12 says: Desire then my words and love them, and you will have discipline like paternal correction, not the sentence of eternal damnation.*

9. Third, since it is strengthened by the perseverance of long-suffering hope, it must keep the divine word with firm patience by enduring evil. Whence Revelation 3:10 says: *Because you have kept the word of my patience, I will keep you from the hour of temptation.* That person observes the word of the patient Christ who, as an example of patience, did not cease to observe the divine word when inflicted with punishment, injury, and abuse; and to such a person Christ says: *I will keep you from the hour of temptation, most of all in death, in that hour when the devil strives to tempt a human being, so as to subvert the person in the end. Whence Gregory in the *Moralia* says: "Unless the merciful Lord modify the temptations in proportion to human strengths there is no one who is able to avoid the insidiousness of evil."*³⁴⁹

10. The third follows: *will never taste eternal death,* where liberation or evasion of eternal death is noted. No one can be liberated from the death of eternal distress, unless a person is first preserved or liberated from the death of one's own iniquity; and it is impossible for any-

³⁴⁸ See Homily 30 n. 2 of GGHG in CCSL cxli, 257.

³⁴⁹ Bonaventure has adapted Book IX, c. 46 n. 71 of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*. See CCSL cxliii, 507.

one to be liberated from the death of one's own iniquity, unless one is liberated from the death of original sin; therefore, any adult, who observes the divine word, is liberated first from the death of original sin by baptismal grace; second, liberated or saved from the death of one's own iniquity by penitential grace; third, liberated from the death of eternal punishment by godlike glory.

11. First, a person is liberated from the death of original sin by baptismal grace. Whence Romans 5:17 says: *For if by reason of one man's offense, death entered through this one, than all the more those receiving the abundance of grace, gifts, and justice will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. For if by reason of one man's, namely the first parent, the transgression of death reigned,*³⁵⁰ in everyone else who descended from this ancestral line by way of lust and concupiscence; *all the more those receiving the abundance of grace, in benign adoption, and gifts, in the fullness of the Holy Spirit's charisma; and justice, in the promotion of good works; in the life of grace, through the baptismal sacrament, will reign, like heirs and kings of the celestial kingdom, through the one Jesus Christ.* And here the Apostle argues by inference *a minori*, because the grace of Christ is more efficacious for the good than the sin of the first person for evil. Thus 1 Corinthians 15:22 says: *Just as all die in Adam, by merit of his offense, so in Christ all will live, through the sacrament of baptism, by merit of his passion.*

12. Second, a person is liberated from the death of one's own iniquity by penitential grace. Whence Ephesians 5:14 states: *Awake you who sleep and arise from the dead and Christ will enlighten you. Awake, by detesting*

³⁵⁰ The critical edition points to Peter Lombard's commentary on Rom 5:17 in PL 191:1394C.

evil, *arise*, by deserting sin, *from the dead*, that is from the deadly works done while in mortal sin and beyond charity, without which no one is worthy of eternal reward; *and Christ will enlighten you*, with the infusion of illuminating grace, which makes known the distance between good and evil, such that one knows to have gone astray by refusing to cling to, and delight in, the unchangeable good. Psalm 88:49 speaks of this: *Who is the person who will live and not see death; who will deliver his soul from the hand of the underworld?* The person *will live* the life of grace, *and not see death* from sin, *who will deliver his soul from the hand of the underworld* by practicing penitential works.

13. Third, a person is liberated from the death of eternal punishment by godlike glory. Whence 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 says: *For this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality. But when this mortal body puts on immortality, then the word that is written shall come to pass: Death is swallowed up in victory. This corruptible body moreover must put on incorruption and immortality, through configuration to the splendor of Christ's body,*³⁵¹ he who is our head; otherwise it would be unseemly, if the head was beautiful and immortal, and the member was corruptible and deformed. However when this takes place, *death* will be absorbed *in the victory* of Christ's resurrection. Let us ask the Lord, therefore, etc.

³⁵¹ See Phil 3:21: "who will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of his glory by exerting the power by which he is able also to subject all things to himself."