

Flute or Dirge
Matthew 11:12-19
October 29, 2023

Have you ever wondered about this passage? Children doing various things to engage others. They try one way playing the flute, used in the movies to bring about dancing and a lively reaction but the others don't even react the way any normal person would. They try playing a dirge, some of you might think of some of our Lutheran hymns where some of you just close your hymns as you can't seem to sing it, not even looking at the words that are there that point to Jesus and eternal life.

Jesus then goes on to point out the dirge and the flute with two different accounts. He points to John the Baptist and how he came to this world, not eating like normal people, his food was some locusts and them not even chocolate covered and some wild honey, maybe the honey helped them go down a little smoother. He wouldn't even touch alcohol, a tee-totaler with many probably thinking he was a little off. I can imagine there were those who didn't want to have anything to do with him, because he was no fun.

Jesus after his description of John, then goes on to Himself. He knows what people are thinking of Him. He is always up for a good meal. We see it when we read the New Testament. He, it seems is always eating with someone or someones. He is at Mary and Martha's. We read of Him going to tax collector's homes to eat like the time He went to Zacchaeus' house. He was the chief tax collector, a rich man. While He was eating all these places, it would be natural that He would be drinking a little too. You may remember His first miracle. You don't think that episode stayed there with just those people at the wedding feast.

We might have thought that the wedding celebrants would have had enough wine by the time they ran out but what does Jesus do? He has the servants fill the water jars with water. Now these were no ordinary jars, each of the six jars held from 20 to thirty gallons. You do the math, 20 to 30, 6 jars, that means 120 to 180 GALLONS of wine. What shape were the partiers in when they finally go to the point where they could only sleep it off? We read about it, what must have been the account that went out through all those there? They were probably talking about that wedding for years after.

Yes, we have some who couldn't be satisfied with either side of the reality before them. They were just like a child that when they get to a certain point there is nothing you can do for them. You try one thing with them to make them happy and it doesn't work. You try another and it doesn't work. You don't know what to do. They just want to fight it. So you haul them off to bed, maybe if they get some sleep they will wake up on the other side of the bed.

Jesus is seeing the same thing, even though He isn't dealing with "little children" they are acting like it, not wanting to be told anything, only wanting to fight. These "grown ups" should have been willing to hear but they didn't and would go so far as to have Jesus killed, for the high priest Caiaphas said it was better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should be destroyed. (John 11:50)

Caiaphas was thinking one way but in his words, he had it just right. The nation of Israel, the way of the old covenant was being destroyed. No longer would sins be temporarily covered over with the blood of animals, no, the New Israel would look to the blood of the one man Jesus, the Messiah, God in the flesh to shed His blood for the new nation of Israel, a nation without borders.

You may wonder why someone picked these texts for today. This text was picked for this day, the day we celebrate the Reformation, the day when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door of the church. Those theses were items he wanted to discuss with the church. He was wanting the church to address certain inconsistencies he saw as he read and studied the scriptures. He wanted it all out in plain sight so it would not only be he that would be looking to the church for answers but maybe even the common man may wonder about those theses.

Luther posted them and then along with the advancement of Gutenberg's (sp) printing press, the platform for social media of the day, Luther brought to light the scriptures, the Word of God to the common man who would get to read and study the Word of God in his own tongue.

What would the common man find in the Word? They would find that it was by the grace of God alone, through faith alone given through Word and sacrament that Christ the only one to look to for salvation that they had hope, the promise of eternal life. They found that they or the saints before them could do nothing to pay for their sins and it was Christ who went to the cross and Him only that they could look for that new

heaven and earth on the last day, the day all look forward to who have been given faith, most in their baptisms, to believe that fact.

Raelynn was brought here this morning to be given faith through the water and the word. Did her parents give her that faith? Did I as her pastor give her that faith? No, none of us did. It was the Holy Spirit through the water and the Word who worked His Work.

Did Raelynn do anything to get it? No, she was dressed this morning to come here. Did she know she was coming here? No, she was brought. Could her parents have said, Oh we don't think it will do her any good so why bother? Yes, they could have but they didn't. Even if there may be some doubt on the behalf of parents as to the efficacy of baptism, parents bring their children because of the promise of God to adopt their children into His family. If we think about it, how great is it that we are part of two families, our earthly family that cares for us and our heavenly family, with the triune God as our "family head?"

Yes, Raelynn has been given a new birth as the Bible says. She has been born again of water and the Spirit. She, along with us has now been adopted into her new family. As she grows in that family, she will get to hear at first of God and of His Son Jesus who came to this earth for her and all people, even though there are those who understand the law but think they aren't that bad and then hear the Good News of Jesus but think they don't need some guy who died 2000 years ago to die for them, they will deal with God themselves.

People just wanted to go about their lives the way they had been. People are no different today. It is all there for them to see and hear. The flute of the Good News of Jesus is being played yet they don't seem to respond. The dirge of the law that accuses them of not living up to God's standards is heard as well but no response, thinking they are good enough. They think that if they trust in Jesus they will have a dirge of a life, no enjoyment. That is a lie the devil seeks to instill. Yes, the devil even works on believers, he already has unbelievers rejecting what is theirs in Jesus.

Many think the Good News of Jesus isn't for them. His is a true flute of freedom of joy, of everlasting life. Yes, John was of the old covenant, looking to life under the law. He saw Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world of God but that was a future look, Jesus had not yet ascended to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

John baptized with water but God told John that he was to prepare the way for the one who would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that entered into Raelynn this morning and the same one who entered into you in your baptisms.

This Reformation day, is the day we celebrate not only Martin Luther's courage to look to facing the leadership in the church but also the day we witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit to enter into Raelynn to help her face the world that for the most part seems to deny that Jesus has any part in their lives and who see those who trust in Jesus as enemies. Yes, Raelynn will need the Holy Spirit as we all do as we deal with this world that seems to be heading in a downward spiral, with the devil influencing humans to do all sorts of evil things, hurting Jesus who so loved the world that He gave up His life for it.

In a couple days, many kids will be enjoying saying three words, Trick or treat, as they will be looking to get some treats. It will be the same day as the Reformation, October 31st. They will not be looking for tricks and Luther wasn't either but he did have to deal with a trick, the trick of the church not wanting to look to the Word of God but to their own word of condemnation for Luther, wanting to go so far as to have him killed rather than look to the Word of God for their defense.

Luther was saved, was hid out for a time as he wrote many things that got out to the people through the printed word. People go to read for themselves what he and others wrote concerning the Word. Luther went even so far as to translate the Word into the language of his native tongue, German.

We have the Word in our native tongue as well. The original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek have been translated into English so that all of us can read it for ourselves.

My Mom gets phone calls offering her end of life insurance. One guy with a foreign accent called her one day to sell her this insurance. She said she didn't need it and proceeded to tell him of Jesus. He said he never had heard that before and he asked her to tell him again, so she did. She was dumbfounded as she couldn't believe he had never heard of Jesus and what He did for all, especially in this day and age.

You have heard and know Jesus and His work on that cross for you. You have heard the flute and the dirge. How are you to respond? Will you respond or not? You have been given the Holy Spirit who lives in you as He now does in Raelynn. May He influence us all to make known what has been done for us to all.