

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[ACCESS DENIED]

The other day, I had gotten a notification from the seminary, and as I went to sign in on my new laptop, I came to the horrible moment so many of us come to: I forgot my password. Trying many and various combinations of passwords I had used in the past, I found myself growing more and more frustrated. What I wanted was simple, it should only have taken a few minutes, but because I forgot my password, I was denied access.

Frustration built up, and I tried as hard as I could to make the password come to mind. About half an hour was spent trying to sift through passwords that I've created since 2005. Maybe I did use the password, “CharmanderRulez” for my seminary account. But as nothing worked, I only grew more and more frustrated and angry, thinking that maybe I should just let Google remember my passwords.

Maybe you've been there before. Perhaps your diligent and have a special file where you keep your passwords written down. If not, then you have to make the call I've made numerous times. The tech department. Only by calling them am I able to gain the access to what I needed in the first place. And as the tech representative spoke with the system, I finally got what I had wanted to in the first place, access.

[Needs]

For Moses and the people of Israel, what they needed was something much more complicated. In fact, they didn't really know *what* they needed. God had brought His people out of Egypt and told them to come worship Him on this mountain. So far, Moses has received a bunch of rules and commandments from God at the mountain.

The people down below don't have much of a clue what's going on. Sure, God has done many wonderful and powerful things for them, but they haven't a clue yet what this God wants for them.

What Moses comes down the mountain with then, are the demands of God, the Law. These clearly tell the people what it is they must do. Not for the sake of Moses, not for Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, nor the seventy elders of Israel. They were to keep the Law because God told them to. What God was giving them were the guidelines they needed to live well among one another.

God was not trying to keep the people from having a fun and enjoyable life, God was giving the people the rules to follow if they wanted the *best* life.

[The Law]

Often though, you and I don't think this way about the Law. We don't hear the Law as rules for the best life. But it makes sense.

Want to know how to follow God?

Have only the one true God. Don't take His name in vain. Honor the Sabbath day.

Want to live happily with in society?

Listen and respect your authorities. Don't murder or steal.

How should you love your neighbors?

Don't bear false testimony against them, don't covet their possessions.

Happy marriage?

Don't commit adultery.

As you and I hear the Ten Commandments, we are reminded of the ways that we have fallen short. There may be no Golden calf outside of your house, but the idols that take root in our lives are laid bare as we go through the Law of God. So, you might lie to yourself. "I've been good enough". "He's much worse than I am." "But, I had a good reason for that sin."

Any excuse or “reason” you and I think is good enough for our sin is found out to be empty.

And now, as you and I watch our sermons and services online, maybe we are taking more time to consider our lives. If we’re doing this, perhaps you and I are starting to realize that we aren’t so different from our forefathers in the faith. Maybe you and I recognize the things that have been taken away from us like sports and leisure, were becoming mini “gods”. As you spend more time watching services and hearing the Word differently than you used to, watching the world around you change, it could be that you’ve started to wonder if God hasn’t revoked access to this generation.

[The Mountaintop]

If that describes you, don’t miss the remarkable moments in Scripture. Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.” (Ex 24:1)

God is commanding His people to come to Him. God is granting *them* access. But only from a distance. The people have no password, no control over the situation to give them access. This was an invitation that only came one way, from God. Notice the subject, *God* is the one who invites. The people are still to stay at a distance. Until Moses is invited forward alone.

Our reading doesn’t end there. Moses then begins to follow the instructions of His God. He then reads the covenant and the people say, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient.” (Ex 24:7) Then, the most radical thing happens. God has them approach, and the people beheld God, and they ate and drank in His presence.

But the people were still sinful. In just a few chapters, the people would rebel again and Aaron would do the unthinkable, giving the people a golden calf and say, “Behold, this is your God!” the people who had been to the mountaintop would lead the people in betraying the God whose presence they were given access. And they had their fair share of excuses too.

“*We* were tired of waiting for Moses.”

“*We* were scared.”

“*We* just wanted to be sure.”

Notice the subject. No matter what excuses *they* had, the people still constantly chose sin. *They* chose to put their trust in themselves and other Gods. *They* chose to pursue their own sinful desires at the cost of others. *God* had given them commandments to help them have the best kind of life, but *they* chose sin and death.

God could be understood if He chose to revoke access to these people.

[The Tabletop]

But years later, man ate and drank in the presence of God.

Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

The disciples had access to God in a way that was vastly different than their forefathers. They didn’t see a God who was walking on pavements of Sapphire, they didn’t see Him in the clearness of the heavens at that time. Instead, they saw Jesus in the flesh. They saw him walking on streets of dirt. Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Jesus ate and drank with them.

He walked with them,

talked with them,

and served them.

On the first Maundy Thursday, the disciples had access to God. But this time, God wrapped a towel around His waist grabbed a water basin, and He washed the disciple's feet. He served them in a way that was personal and unique. He served them as both God and man.

Because the next day, he would serve them again. He would empty himself on the cross for them. For you. For me. He would die so that people who chose sin time and time again would have forgiveness for eternity. *He* washed the disciples feet on Thursday and on that Friday *He* would provide the death that would wash their very souls. *He* provided the death that gives you access to come near to God.

Notice the subject.

This is what Jesus offers you today. He has washed away your sins. He has prepared you for the presence of the One True God. He's given access to people who don't deserve it. But this access can be forgotten in the hustle and bustle of our lives. That's why He gave you the gift of Holy Baptism. A washing of your body that is a daily reminder.

You have access to the One True God. Now and Forever.

So be it.

Amen.

As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
