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Isaiah 55:8-11

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ who and is and is to come. Amen

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.*

*⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,*

*¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we are commemorating the 500 years of the Reformation because in this determined moment in time the Word of God descended upon an agonizing Augustinian monk and it transformed him. The transformation has reverberated through the history of humanity and had unimagined religious, social, political and educational consequences in the world during this time, and correspondingly, if we take it seriously, it can transform our lives and life of our communities and society. As the canon

states, The Word of the Lord does not come empty, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

I invite you to consider this small verse.

The text suggests to us a coming and a going, the subject of this Action is God using His/Her creative Word as the only tool.

At one moment in the life of Martin Luther, just a few words from Scriptures took on a whole new meaning: For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:17. It is wonderful to think that so few words could have such a great impact, so powerful in the history of humanity.

We can say that, in the discovery of this moment, in this precise moment THE WORD descended from on high and began to “yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater,” and comes to completion as the blessing of bread for humanity, that visible sign of the Body of Christ, bread of life, bread that is communion for all the saints (people).

If we read the Scriptures and have a heart that is open to hearing the truth, we too can be transformed by this Word. Martin Luther’s case is not unique to him. Long before, two esteemed persons well known to us had this sensitivity. One was Pedro Valdo, who was spiritually challenged by the text from Matthew 19:21 which says: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Pedro Valdo was rich, and after hearing this challenge sold all that he had...a little later Francis of Assisi heard: “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ Luke 10:4-5. Even today Franciscans greet each other with “Peace and wellbeing.”

Brothers and sisters, if we are here today commemorating the 500 years of the Reformation it is because at one moment in time, the Word of God became flesh and came to the world in Jesus of Nazareth.

When Isaiah objects the thoughts and ways of humanity compared to those of God, without saying so is making a reference the ways and thoughts of Jesus, which are revealed to us through Scripture. No matter the passage, no matter if it is the Old Testament or the New Testament, this piece of Scripture is inspired by the ways and thoughts of God as revealed through God’s own son, Jesus. For this reason, Jesus can say “I am the Way the truth and the life.” Let us not be mistaken, the work, this vital motivation of the reformers was born in Jesus, of God by means of the Word, that confronts the ways of humanity, of the church through the ways of Jesus. The debate during the time of Luther was not about whether indulgences were good or bad as a custom or as a resource for gathering funds for a good cause, the debate was whether they were consistent with the ways and thoughts of Jesus as manifested by Jesus.

For Pedro Valdo the problem was not if the Church was rich or not, but if a Christian could continue to be Christian in this form or way when the way put forward by Jesus is different. It is true we are not all Valdo or Luther...

This does not impede us on occasions so special from being confronted by the Gospel, to revise one more time our practices, our ways and our thoughts as they relate to the model Jesus has offered. The negative tone from today's passage points out with great clarity what we have just proposed, that we always come out as debtors because of the vast distance between our way of thinking and walking and God's. There is no point of contact, no possible comparison.

If each of us were to take into account one of the four Gospels, just one, and compare the way of Jesus with our own, if one is sincere his/her beliefs, the only conclusion that we could draw is that our way doesn't even come close to the way of Jesus or what Jesus did. WE cannot even touch the shadow of his heel in mercy, in freedom from prejudices, in compassion for those who suffer, in love for all people. If we were to do this exercise of reading just one Gospel and its consequence for our lives we would discover just how contaminated we are by sin. The only conclusion we could come to is how dirty and envious our thoughts are, how greed, deceit and ambition for power stains our hearts, how much violence, hate, racism and discrimination there is in our own familiar lives...

Brothers and sisters, if we are here today commemorating the 500 years of the Reformation it is because at one moment in time, the Word of God became flesh and came to the world in Jesus of Nazareth.

I insist that if we are here today, it is because the Word has not returned empty but it has done that which God has desired and has prospered in the purpose for what God sent it. Today a "Gospel of prosperity" is fashionable and must clearly name it, yet not one of the reformers work prospered them only the Word they heard and accepted. For the Word to prosper, as Isaiah says, it must come through the cross, for Jesus had pass through the cross to be resurrected. No one offered Luther a Ferrari, much less a car, he died sick and poor. His prosperity consisted in the Word of God as it was read in the languages of the people. His translations of the Scriptures into German became the impulse for the same thing to happen in the languages throughout Europe. Prosperity for Pedro Valdo was to spread the Scriptures to all of Bohemia, he never won the lottery nor purchased a mansion like the pseudo-Bishop Macedo. Our prosperity needs to be fashioned in the same style. We do not need more reformers who confuse the Word with personal, ecclesial health or economic prosperity.

Young people, read the Gospels, discover that vital strength of the Scriptures in your lives and do not fear the difficulties that this conflictual world will present you. Christ is calling you to announce His peace, use social media to show your fascination with your thoughts and way. Only in this manner will this world, your world be converted and transformed. Only in this manner will the Kin/dom of God draw near even if just a little. To my peers, I say: "It's worth it!" It is worth it to denounce ecological crimes even though many do not want to listen. It is worth it to demand peace and justice. It is worth it to be a Christian committed to the cause which denounce the objectification of and violence against women. It is worth it because "Christ is the visible image of God, who is invisible;

before everything created. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.” Col 1:15-16

It is worth it because Christ is our peace dying in an unjust form for us. It is worth it because Christ forgave, touched, healed and restored the dignity of the women of his time. Our entire commemoration only makes sense, Yes Only, if we can leave worship today repeating to ourselves It is worth it, It is worth it, It is worth it and it will be worth it.

I invite you once again to sing all together, the Word of the Lord does not return empty.