



Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Rev. C. Alfred Loua Transcript

“Each Of Us is Absalom”

How could God permit such evil, loss, and despair to abound in our world? Because with it is the redeeming hope for reconciliation, forgiveness, and love. “God does not take any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” preaches the Rev. C. Alfred Loua, but rather in their return from wrongdoing. This is what the story of King David and his son Absalom’s death teach us. David’s hope for his son “represents God’s unconditional love for every one of us.” The readings are 2 Samuel 18:5–9, 15, 31–33; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; and John 6:35, 41–51.

Sermon Transcript:

Oh, my son Absalom. My son, my son, Absalom, would I had died instead of you. Oh, Absalom, my son, my son. Please be seated.

In a middle school Bible class some years ago. A student, after quoting different biblical passages, where the devil is very active, he added that Satan was still active in the world. Giving examples of bad things that were going on, around the world at that time. He then wondered, if God could not eliminate Satan and evildoers. Why did God continue to keep them? The question was not and is still not new. We want God to deliver the world from the power of evil doers. We would like Him to do so in our way. Our first lesson this Sunday ends up with King David's deep and sorrowful statement weeping over his son's death. "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son." We have heard a lot about David these past Sundays. The king that God, by his prophet Samuel, declared to Saul, the King Saul, "The man after his heart." Samuel said to King Saul, "The Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom will not continue. The Lord has sought for himself, a man after his own heart." David became the greatest king of Israel. He united the nation. But one of his many children, Absalom, rebelled against him.

He created an army and wanted to kill his father. When David heard about that, he organized his own army to fight the army of his son. David said the Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the three commanders of his army, "I myself will go out with you." The three commanders said to David. "You shall not to go out. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth 10,000 of us." They asked King David to support them from the city, with the people. Then David ordered his commanders. His order is the first line of our first lesson today. He said to them, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, Absalom." We feel like asking David, what do you mean? Or what is wrong with you? How can one deal gently, under the fire of someone looking to kill him? David's son Absalom, was killed. His killing was well received and appreciated as good news by everyone except David. The Cushite announced to David, "Good tidings for my lord, the King. For the Lord has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you.

David's immediate reaction was, "Is it well with the young man, Absalom?" Reaction to leave everyone speechless. It was shocking that the good news for the commanders and the whole Israel was the worst

news for David. He withdrew to his chamber weeping. "Oh my son, Absalom, my son, my son." David wept because his enemy's son, the one who wanted to kill him was killed. David was the man after God's heart, because he knew that he was a child of God. He knew how God was dealing with him in his personal life. We know David. He wanted to do the same for his son. David was hungry, thirsty for God. He tried to please God despite his failures. That is what we are required to do too. David believed in change. He returned from wrongdoing. He might believe that Absalom could be brought to him alive and he will forget him, he will help him to change. But for the commanders, Absalom would remain a danger for the king and also for Israel. In this, David is the figure of God for each of us. Jesus invites us to pray, to pray to God calling him Our Father, who art in heaven. Like David, Our Father in Heaven does not want the death of any of us, even the death of the wicked.

The prophet Ezekiel said that God does not take any pleasure in the death of the wicked, but their return from their ways and leave. David believed in forgiveness and reconciliation. Whatever the fault was, hard for us, but God may still be waiting for Satan and every evil doers to return to him. He did not create them, they became what they are. Their return to God happens anytime an evil thinking or evil doing is stopped in our own life and in the life of everybody else. That is what we need to focus on. That is what we have to celebrate. David's love and patience and hope for Absalom represents God's unconditional love for every one of us. Each of us is Absalom. Absalom in this word, in our relationships with God, through our relationships among ourselves and towards the whole creation, the creation which was God's pure will when he declared it good. In his letter to the Ephesians, we read today St Paul exalted us not to let the sun go down on our anger and to not make room for the devil. Instead of asking God to act humanly, to act the way we act, God's children are rather invited to embrace the Father, the Spirit to be merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding and steadfast love and faithfulness.

God is in that work through his beloved son, Jesus Christ, which wants us in our humanity to divinize us and to provide us with His eternal life. Hence, we hear Jesus Christ today in the gospel offering himself to us and offering himself to the world as the bread of life, the bread who came from heaven. St Paul said to the Romans, just as the sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, even so grace will reign to righteousness, to eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Through food, the humanity in Adam was separated from God. We lost God's presence in the garden of Eden. Through food, the bread of heaven, the son wants to establish not only that relationship with God, but more than that to give us eternal life. We are blessed as we have accepted Jesus in our lives. We believe in him, therefore, he considered us as a gift, a gift from his father. His homework is to take care of that gift, to honor that gift, we are. All that the Father gives me will come to me and the one who comes to me has received Him by no mean. Children of God, we are a gift from God to Jesus just as Absalom was a gift from God to David. David and Jesus do whatever it takes to save the gift. We understand David weeping, we understand his sorrow, willing to die in the place of his son. Jesus died for us. He died for us. That's what David said. He would like to die instead of his son. His son died in his sin, but Jesus died for us to save us. May the bread of heaven who give eternal life open our heart to receive and honor him, our eternal union with the Father. Amen.