

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Ezekiel's Words find you in a circumstance not unlike Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. For seven years Ezekiel prophesied that Judah must repent, or God would punish them. You live in a country filled by men who worship false gods, or who believe in no god at all. And although they may have altars and priests and worship services, or not, they are as the men of Babylon, for the One True God does not hear their prayers. His ears are closed to the prayers of a heart of stone.

Remember what happened to the men of Ezekiel's time: Jerusalem fell, Judah was defeated and taken into captivity by their enemies, and pagans inhabited the Promised Land. But the perversity of Babylon of the 6th century B.C. has nothing on our country. We are greater sinners than they.

And we have been no more faithful to God than recalcitrant Israel, who for less reason than we have given God, suffered punishment by Babylonian hands. A stone heart is incapable of repentance. Our hearts have been no less hearts of stone than theirs.

Consider what goes on around you each day. Lying has become an acceptable way of achieving a desired end. Male and female are confused, and those who desire to change genders are encouraged and accepted. Our public schools prohibit the One True God and the Scriptures He gives to be taught to our children. Christians are mocked and slandered, as is the God we worship. It is as God spoke through Ezekiel: His Great Name is profaned among the nations.

Men believe they are the spawn of apes, or of aliens, or of a fortuitous lightning strike on a biologically-rich pond, the origins of neither understood by fallen men. And that the fallen world calls "science". But perhaps the most egregious of all, babies are put to death in the very sanctuary God gave for their protection – their mother's womb. Could the Israelites in Ezekiel's time, or even the Babylonians, a pagan and idolatrous people, have been any worse?

A stone is silent. Silence is the confession of a heart of stone. For a living heart isn't silent. A heart of faith confesses, boldly and loudly, the Truth of God and His Word. A heart of stone looks away when falsehoods and debauchery and perversion and even infanticide are committed.

But a heart of faith cannot look away. A heart of faith openly speaks the Truth against such transgression. Have you spoken against the perversions of our day? Or have you been silently caused to doubt what Scripture teaches by the imaginings of God-hating men? Have you stood up for the Truth? Have you confessed the One True God, the Only True God, in the face of the idolatry of our day? Have you done as God commands through Isaiah? "...put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes!"

Repent, and hear the amazing Word of grace that God gave Ezekiel to preach, not the condemning, slaying Word of Law, nonetheless Divine, but instead, in mercy, in grace, His

Word of Promise and life: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.” Israel could not cleanse herself. Nor can you. But God can. He can remove every stain, every blemish, every transgression. And more, God does exactly that for you. He sprinkles upon you the clean Water of Regeneration. In the font you are re-Genesis-ed, created anew, born from above.

And by that new birth does He do for you what He promised: He cleanses you from your filthiness. He takes the silent, dead heart of stone out of your flesh, and He gives you a new heart, a clean heart, a living heart, a confessing heart. He puts His Spirit within you. And by that Spirit does He lead you to walk in His Statutes. And by the faith that Spirit works in you, that you receive all the Promises of God.

The life-giving power of that God-ordained Water comes from the One who gave His life for you. He suffered the blows and insults of slavery to hostile unbelievers. He was taken by force. Men who worshipped different gods beat and mocked and crucified the One True God. Then God gave His life, that you might have life.

His heart was stilled, that your heart be filled with faith. His heart was pierced, that the Water and Blood that bring you new life and a new heart spill forth. He gave up His Spirit that in baptism you might receive His Spirit, the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son. And just as Israel returned from Egyptian and Babylonian captivity to the Promised Land – alive – so did God the Son leave that tomb alive.

While the paraments are violet we especially remember His suffering and death. We meditate on the Mysteries of His Holy Passion. By faith we see Him on the Via Dolorosa. We hear the insults. We see the wounds. We behold the cross. For a little while more we see the Crucifixes, the images of His death. By them we remember what we have deserved, what He bore for us, what He bore for you. So, in faith, you proclaim His death until He comes. But even through the violet, faith knows that His death is victory over sin. Faith knows that He is not dead. He who gives life lives.

That you live, He comes to you in Bread and Wine and Word to heal your soul. He gives you His Blood, the Saving Blood of Christ that fills your new heart, that you live. Though your sins were as scarlet, He makes them white as snow. Though they were as crimson, He makes them as wool.

And you eat, you drink, and you confess with faithful Ezekiel, you confess with the blind man cured, you confess with every sinner declared a saint, you confess with the Holy Church: “Lord, I believe!” And you worship Him.

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