

June 26, 2022
The Third Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

“The Rotten Rescue”

Grace and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. This past week I was reading a very good devotion and it was talking about life in humid St. Louis. It reminded me of my dad when I was growing up how he would talk about how everything gets rotten in Saint Louis, your fruits, your vegetables, your bread, even if you put it in the refrigerator. Because of all the humidity, they just don't last long. They rot. He talked about this many times. Then we moved to Bishop where you rarely have relative humidity above 5%. That would be a muggy day there in the high desert; and how things just lasted. Fruit, vegetables, bread, they just don't get soggy, or moldy. My dad, I think the favorite thing for him was he could leave a bag of potato chips open, and they didn't get stale.

But when we look at the world around us, I think he would agree with me, it's kind of rotten. In fact, it's something that inspired Shakespeare in his play, Hamlet Act one, scene 4. Marcellus a guard is speaking to his comrade Horatio, and he says, “There’s something rotten in Denmark.” He was making the comparison between the situation in Denmark, where the leadership was absolutely rotten, and he was comparing them to rotten fish. And his point was that that rottenness makes its way from the top, from the place of power, down through the people itself.

I thought this past week, as I was reading, ‘boy, is that appropriate for us today!’ One of those polls that comes out, asked the question, “What do you think of the morality in the United States today? Are we excellent? Are we good? Are we fair? Or are we poor? The results of that little survey poll were that 51% said we're poor, we're lousy. Another 37% said we're fair at best. If you do the math on that, you realize that only 12% of the people that were questioned, said we were good or excellent. And as I looked at the news throughout the week, I had to think indeed

something is rotten in the world, in the United States, and California, and all too often in the Church.

For instance, as I looked at the news, I saw that the New York subway has started a new advertising campaign. They've got posters posted on the walls and on those posters, it says, "Don't be ashamed you are using, be empowered that you are using it safely. Never use Fentanyl alone. If that isn't just an encouragement for people to be drug abusers and use fentanyl, I don't know what is. Man, that's craziness!"

The Orange County Register reported that employees at all California community colleges you know the J. C.'s are going to be required to sign a statement of affirmation or agreement or ethics. And the statement says that professors, I quote, "shall employ teaching and learning practices and curriculum that reflect D. E. I. A. and anti-racist principles. Meanwhile, faculty supervisors must place a significant emphasis on D.E.I.A. competencies in employee evaluation and for tenure review processes. Finally, administrators are told that they must employ D.I.E.A. when considering all funding, all decision making, all planning and learning program establishment. You might be saying what in the world is D.E.I.A. Hey, I know DEA is Drug Enforcement Agency, but what is this D.E.I.A? Diversity, equity, inclusiveness, anti-racism to be specific.

Is it any surprise then, when we look at the news and we find that within our schools here in California, students are presently being encouraged to come up with their own pronouns such as this "THISS." It's a combination of his and they it's for someone who feels they're a male, but they don't want to be identified as a male, but yet they're not happy with that generic "they." So, they're both they and his. They are "Thiss." And of course, the counterpart is "Thers."

And then I read that we have inequity in the acronyms that we are using. Because if you use LGBTQIA+ you're not being equitable to those represented by the plus. So, we are now supposed to make sure that we use the proper acronym LGBTQQIP2SAA which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, and sexual two spirit,

that's for the Native Americans, asexual and ally. You might say, "ally?" Oh yeah, if you aren't an ally of all of those, then you must be cancelled because you're hateful.

And then it was also released that there was a study done on transgenderism in the United States. And that for those people aged 13 to 25, and again this is straight from the New York Times. That age group shows quote "a disproportionately large share of the trans-gender population. Is it any surprise? They're the ones that are going through all this cool stuff we just talked about.

It's not just that, the Boston Transit Authority announced that they are now installing urine sensors on the elevators so that when someone urinates in the elevator, a warning siren goes off, lights begin to flash the doors will come open at the closest floor. People are to evacuate, and that elevator will not be able to be used until it has been cleaned by the people trained in cleaning elevators full of urine.

So why do I start with this depressing, angering, maybe silly beginning to the sermon? The answer is because it's biblical. It has definite overtones of Revelation 13, where we are introduced to the beast. The first beast has 10 horns, 7 heads, 10 diadems, and blasphemous names written on its head. Again, this is figurative speech or apocalyptic language. Everything is figurative. Horns represent power, 10 is the number of completion. It has complete power. Seven heads, it's the perfect number, it's perfect knowledge. One of those heads though looks like it had died but it's alive. We'll talk about that in a moment. And 10 diadems, those are 10 crowns, it represents royal authority. And blasphemous names? Well, it's spewing out blasphemy, that which mocks God.

I would contend this is a reference to the government and that government is we read: "given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words." Something like we've heard from California here in the past week about becoming a sanctuary state for abortion. That if you need an abortion, California will pay for you to come here, pay for your abortion, and pay for your trip back home. Maybe it's just pretty

well summed up in this whole month where the federal government and state government are all respecting and observing pride month. Or maybe it's just as simple as the continued teaching of evolution, that there is no God. We are all the product of primordial slime.

Regardless, when we look at the book of Revelation, what we see is that this beast is allowed to make war on the Saints, or on God, church, and all who dwell on earth (except for the Saints) will worship it, will look to it, will hold it as the savior. And from this beast there will now come power for a second beast. A second beast that looks like a lamb, it mimics Jesus it's 'I'm the savior,' look to me for all your answers, that speaks like a dragon. The dragon is symbolic of Satan, who again in scripture we read: "when he speaks, he lies, for lying it is his native language." This second beast receives its power, or shall we say funding, from the first beast. And it drives people to worship the first beast. Also were told that you can't do anything without the mark of the beast. And of course, people have taken that and gone literal with it. And they forget the very next sentence which says, and I quote: "that is the name of the beast, or the number of its name, and that number is 666. 6 is the number of men in the Bible; 3 the number of God. It's when man puts himself above God, that's the name of the beast, man before God."

So I'd like you to consider for a minute what I've just been talking about. You want to start a business, what do you need? You need a business license. Where do you get that? From the government. You want to sell certain products; you need a permit. Where do you get that? From the government. You want to build the house; I need a permit from the government. You want to drive, got to have a license. Where do you get that? From your government. You want to buy a car? Yeah, you have got to have license plates. You need a permit for that. You want a job, you need a Social Security number, and in many cases, you needed a diploma coming from, that's right higher education, which is what is used by the beast to indoctrinate you to follow the beast and have it tell you what you need to do. Not God's Word, much less God.

All of this power in one area where everybody is all sharing and agreeing and all of that, sounds a lot like socialism, communism.

Remember back in the 1980s where we heard that it was dead and now it seems to be roaring back alive.

So, if you are God, you saw all of this happening what would you do? Compare whatever you're thinking to what God says in our Old Testament today, Isaiah 65 where God said, "I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me. I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said here am I, here am I, to a nation that was not called by my name." He then goes on to say how He spreads out His hands to bring them close. Much like in our gospel this morning, Jesus says He wanted to gather the people of Jerusalem to Him as a as a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings.

But what else does God say about these people that he wants to save? He says they are quote; "a rebellious people, they walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.' Can I hear a D.E.I.A. or an LGBTQQIP2SAA? These are the devices of man. And what does He say about those devices? I quote: "provoke me constantly." He goes on to say that they worship false gods in the garden. It's the worship of creation. They slipped into looking to the dead, for spiritual guidance, or the macabre and the whole infatuation we have with zombies today. They spend their nights in secret places because they don't want people to see. They eat pigs' flesh, which is forbidden in scripture, in the Old Testament. It's basically saying they feed themselves that which is garbage. And how much feeding is being done at that trough of the internet entertainment?

What does all of this lead to? Understand I'm quoting God here, they "say to me, keep to yourself, do not come near me for I am too holy for you." Stay away God, separation of church and state. You have no business in the affairs of the country, or society, or even your church. We know what's best, we set ourselves apart for ourselves. We're too holy for you. And that's where God finally says, "they are quote smoke in my nostrils." He's ready to judge this. And when He says that He's speaking words of judgment, of war, which is guaranteed condemnation or in the Hebrew "anathema," which means literally set aside for destruction. But, in the midst of verse he still comes back and says, but spare the new wine

in the cluster. It's a vision of a cluster of grapes do all the junk on the outside that you take the outside away and inside there's still some good grapes. And God says I'm going to take those good grapes, I'm going to make good wine out of it, so don't throw out the good with the rotten. He takes the good out, He makes new wine.

Now when we take Revelation 13, then we put that together with Isaiah 65; there is a call there. A call where God says, "here is a call for endurance, for faith, for wisdom, for understanding." Understand God's Word, understand His promises. Why? That requires wisdom and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, to stand in awe of God. Go back to Genesis 1, and say He is creator God, He is in control. But that requires faith, and in the trying times it requires endurance. But when we heed that call for endurance, for faith, for wisdom, for understanding; we realize that life may be rotten, but we can rejoice because heaven is our home. It is our home by the amazing grace, that comes to us through Jesus Christ. And so, we can faithfully endure. We can glorify God. We can look for and be the good grapes among the rotten. Because we know He is coming back to, well, to rescue us. Hence the sermon title name, the Rotten Rescue, where He takes us and makes something new in His heavenly home for all eternity.

In our Savior's name, Amen.