

Psalm 5:5 (Introit)

You may have missed it when it was chanted by the choir this morning. It's in the Introit for today - Psalm 5. And I draw your attention to it now. The line before it reads: "*The boastful shall not stand before your eyes.*" And then we come to it. Just four words, but they may knock the wind out of us. Here they are..."*You hate all evildoers.*" I'll read it again. "*You hate all evildoers.*" Now wait a minute! This flies in the face of what we always heard and believed. God is love. He doesn't hate anyone, except the devil. Weren't we taught that 'God hates the sin but loves the sinner?' But this says, "*You hate all evildoers.*" Not just the evil they do, God hates the doers of evil.

So how can a loving God hate anyone? And since there are a whole lot of evildoers, this means there are a whole lot of people God hates. But John 3:16 says, "*For God so loved the world...*" Nothing of hate here. He loved the entire world which is full of sinners. In Romans 5 it says, "*God loved us in this, that while we were still sinners, (evildoers), Christ died for us.*" No hate in that, just love. So why this text in Psalm 5 - "*You hate all evildoers?*" We simply do not like to use "God" and "hate" in the same sentence. Oh, we know there are haters of God. Our own sinful flesh hates God. But we think that God is above hating anyone.

How wrong we are! Let's use the case of two brothers. God says through both His Prophet Malachi, and His Apostle Paul, "*Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.*" Esau and Jacob were brothers...sons of Isaac. Neither one was a shining example of how God's people should live. We want to probe into their behavior to see how God could love the one but not the other. Yet it all boils down to this...Esau despised his birthright. He sold it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. But in despising his birthright, Esau was despising the promise of the coming Savior, for the promise of the Messiah, the Christ, was all wrapped up within the birthright. Esau thought more of filling his belly than of the Lord Jesus who was to come. And thus, God hated Esau but loved Jacob. Jacob was just as sinful as his brother, but he was a sinner who believed in, and looked for the Savior to come. Esau was not.

When we speak of love, we speak in terms of a feeling, an emotion; not really something we can grasp, and taste, and handle--something down deep within us that is hard to explain. Not so with God. God's love is not an emotion in His gut. It's not a feeling or a warmth within Him. God's love is a person. God's love is Jesus. Just as the birthright in the Old Testament was all wrapped up in Jesus, so God's love for us is all wrapped up in Jesus. So much so, that we cannot even speak of God's love apart from Christ.

This is always how the Bible speaks of God's love. It connects it to Jesus. In Romans 5..."*In this is love...Christ died for us.*" In John 3..."*For God loved the world in this, that He gave His only Son*" It goes on to say that whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already. Jacob, sinner though he was, believed in God's Son who was coming, and he was not condemned. No condemnation, no punishments, no wrath of God, not a God who hated him, but who loved him. All because of Jesus. Esau did not believe in the coming Christ, and so he was condemned already then. Did God want Esau to perish? No..."*I take no pleasure,*" says God, "*in the death of the wicked.*" But because Esau turned away from the Savior, he did not see a loving God; only a God of wrath and punishment, condemnation and hatred.

Which God do you have...a God who loves you, or a God who hates you? If God hated you, then why did He bring you to Jesus in your baptism? If God hated you, then why does He draw you here to where His Word is delivered, His forgiveness is given, His Sacrament is placed into your mouth? God loved the world in Christ. A world full of evildoers He loved by sending His Son to the cross for all.

No sinner was excluded. No sin was left behind. Christ died for all sinners. The evil of every evildoer was borne by Him on the cross. And in that moment we can truthfully say that God hated His Son. *"My God!"* Jesus cried, *"Why have you forsaken Me!"* God turned His back on Jesus. He punished Him severely. At that moment in time as Jesus hung on the cross, He was the only evildoer in the entire world, and God hated Him, for He was covered with every sin, every act of selfishness, every act of immorality. The evil of the most vile offender belonged to Jesus. *"He became sin for us,"* the Bible says. God hated His beloved Son because God hates sin, and Jesus became sin for you and me.

But then it was finished. Jesus died and rose again. And now when we look at Jesus, we see the love of God for us. And friends, since Jesus is God's love, and since Baptism is Christ, and the Lord's Supper is Christ, and the Word of the Gospel is Christ...God's love is indeed something we can grasp, something we can taste, and handle. God's love was poured out upon your head when you were baptized. God's love is placed into your mouth at the Communion Table. God's love is put into your ears as you sit in the pew. No hate here. Only love, God's love--Jesus, for you.

Do you have a God who loves you? Do not ever attempt to answer this question by looking at your life. For when we look at our life, we see sinfulness, selfish living, immorality, covetousness, unrighteous anger. When we look at our life we see an evildoer, and we will doubt God's love. We will say, "He must hate me, for I am full of sin and wickedness." Friend, God's hatred is the absence of Christ. And since God has placed Christ into your life, you can believe with joy that you have a loving God for Jesus' sake. God's love is Jesus, and so look to the font and say, "I know I am loved by God, for I am baptized into Christ." Look to the Sacrament and say, "I know God loves me, for here in bread and wine He gives me Jesus, His love, for me."

I don't care how much evil you have done in your life. You belong to Jesus who died for you, and here gives Himself to you. The evil in your heart and life is forgiven. You are forgiven by a God of love, a God who does not turn His back on you, a God who keeps giving Jesus--His love, to you...a God who calls you, not an evildoer, but His forgiven child in Jesus. Amen.