

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

Israel was again unfaithful. God was a faithful Husband to them, they were a cheating bride. They burdened God with their sins and wearied Him with their offenses. They withheld the prescribed offerings, clinging to the material at the expense of the eternal. Through Isaiah, God spoke strong words of condemnation to them. “Your first father sinned...”, said God. So would God consign Jacob to destruction, and Israel to scorn.

So it is with each of us. Selfishly, we have all had an “on again, off again” relationship with God. When we have perceived times to be good, we have easily forgotten God. We have wrongly assumed that we were coasting along well on our own power, safe, secure, bellies full. While God has been faithful, each of us has been like Israel – a cheating bride, seeking gratification from the very things that God has warned against, in false security neglecting to hear His Word, to pray, to seek His saving gifts.

But when things have “gone south”, when tribulation or hardship or danger or heartache have struck, we have expected to approach God as one might approach an ATM to withdraw from Him what you think is necessary, to demand from Him what you think the situation requires. This is to sinfully demand faithfulness from God, but to willingly wander yourself. It is to subordinate God to yourself, as if that were possible. It is the act of a cheating bride. It is what Israel did before the northern kingdom was destroyed and the people taken into Assyrian captivity. It is what Judah did before

Jerusalem was sacked and burned, and Babylon’s shackles filled with Jewish slaves. By your sins you have deserved no less than eternal slavery and death in the Babylon below.

Israel was unfaithful. But in His mercy, God, speaking through the lips of the Prophet Isaiah, says “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” He tells Israel to forget the past, for He is doing a new thing. He makes a way in the desert, and streams in the wasteland, that His people, His chosen, might drink and live and proclaim His praise.

Then the Prophet speaks God’s comforting Promise in the wonderful Gospel canticle just read from Isaiah. In His mercy, God calls sinful Jacob His servant, and wandering Israel He calls His chosen: “Hear now O Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. In grace calls His wayward people Jeshurun, an affectionate name reserved for those He loves.

God extends the same grace to you. He extends to you the same forgiveness, love and mercy. The Lord that made you, the Lord that formed you in the womb, is the God that blots out your transgressions. He is the God that pours out His blessings upon you. His Son He gave to receive your curse, the punishment for your sins. Jesus Christ bore that punishment unto death on the cross. And then the true Jeshurun, the Upright One, the only-begotten Son, the beloved Son of God, took up His life again. He satisfied the Law, paying the price for the sins of all men, even those of your first father.

In you, dear Christian, God does the new thing that He promises through Isaiah. He pours water on dry ground, which is to say that He baptizes you out of death and into life. He pours His Spirit upon you, that God dwell in you, that by faith in Him you receive all the blessings of forgiveness and life. You are the true Israel, the Israel of faith, God's chosen in Christ Jesus His Son. He blots out your transgressions. He remembers your sins no more.

Seven centuries after Isaiah spoke God's Word to Israel, Isaiah's Lord, the true Prophet, multiplied the five loaves and two fish, and fed the multitudes. So did God keep His Promise, as He poured out His blessing on Jacob's offspring. But it was not the bread nor the fish that were the true blessing. It was faith worked by hearing the Word of God. And so does He keep His Promise this day. For He has promised that those who eat and drink of this miraculous meal will receive forgiveness and everlasting life. And what He promises, He gives to you.

So fear not. God has made you His servant. You, beloved of God, He has proclaimed upright and beloved, His Jeshurun. He has chosen you. He has made you alive. Now He feeds you, unto life everlasting.

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Johannes Huss, a Czech, was born in 1370, and by the age of 28 was a lecturer at the University of Prague. He was ordained Priest at the age of 31, the following year he was installed as

Rector of the University of Prague. He preached at the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, a Chapel founded that the Word of God be preached in the language of the people. He opposed the corruption of the Roman Catholic church, and worked to restore true devotion among Christians. Historians call him "fearless" in his defense of the faith. He publicly taught that the Church is the Body of the elect, and insisted that the public teachings of the church be in harmony with the Holy Scriptures. While he disagreed on many points, Huss' affinity for the ideas of Englishman John Wycliffe left him open to charges of heresy. He was forbidden to preach in 1409, excommunicated in 1410, and subject to the greater excommunication in 1412. After a hearing before the Council of Constance in 1414, he was condemned and imprisoned, and on this day, July 6, 1415, he was burned at the stake.

It is said that a priest observing Huss' execution recorded that Huss, whose name means "goose" in the Bohemian language, when asked to recant his teachings, responded "You are now roasting a goose, but God will awaken a swan whom you will not burn or roast." And as they shouted much against him, which he could not answer, he reportedly said: "After one hundred years I will answer you."

101 years later Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. Luther referred to himself as the swan which Huss promised. Even as he preached over Luther's casket, Johann Bugenhagen, Luther's Pastor, referred to Luther as the swan. In portraits Luther is frequently depicted with a swan.