Follow Jesus Sermon Series

"Follow the Myrrh" -- Psalm 45:6-8

Lent Midweek 4 Sermon

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

In Genesis 1:11 God said, "'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.' And it was so." Two weeks ago we considered the trees with their respective fruits that were made this day of creation. Tonight we ponder an aromatic gum that comes from one of the shrubs that was created on the third day. Myrrh - a bitter-to-the-taste oil or resin that gives off a fragrance that is most wonderful to the nostrils.

As is characteristic of God's creation, it is good. Myrrh is a product of God's good Word: Let there be myrrh and there was myrrh and behold it was good. As is characteristic of fallen man's sinful nature, that which is good is all too often perverted. With myrrh in mind, the journey from Genesis through Revelation is a litany of myrrh in the service of sin and of myrrh in the service of the Savior Who is graciously present in and with His Church and each of His children therein.

The psalmody for this evening is a love song written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and intended to be psalmed by the faithful. The goodly theme and the verses of the psalm are directed as a confession to and a proclamation of Christ the King. The sermon text is a portion of that psalm. Please listen to that declaration as we ...

... Follow the Myrrh ...

"Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity;
You love righteousness and hate wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed You
with the oil of gladness above your fellows;
Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Myrrh employed in the service of sin leads to fleshly temptation and the land of bondage. For example, Old Testament Joseph is in the pit, thrown there by his brothers. He is cast into an empty pit. His brothers "sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way down to Egypt" (Genesis 37:23). So Judah's brother is sold to them and the Ishmaelites add him to their products for sale ... gum, balm, Joseph and myrrh.

The myrrh will be used to freshen pharaohs' corpses, to scent the royal chambers, to anoint the robes of the pagan priests and to perfume the beds of temptresses ... all in the service of sin. Potiphar's wife will attempt to seduce young Joseph and his reply to her is a question, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God" (Genesis 39:9).

Is it any wonder that the son of David wrote of Lady Folly who seduces as she has opportunity. Indeed, of her, Solomon wrote that the temptress ...

"... seizes him and kisses him, and with impudent face she says to him: 'I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have decked my couch with coverings, colored spreads of Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home'" (Proverbs 7:13-20).

Thus far Babylon the whore who employs the merchants of myrrh in the trafficking of "slaves, that is, human souls" (Revelation 18:13). Whether it is myrrh, the good gift of sexuality or the new life of a Christian ... all can be misused in the service of sin. If you have or are misusing any of God's gifts ... the internet, alcohol, money, education, pain pills, the Bible, the office of being a parent, real estate, words, social security, music and any other of God's good creation, know that you will have a day of reckoning, if not this night, perhaps tomorrow, certainly on Judgment Day.

All of the aforementioned are given by the good God and intended for the welfare and benefit of you and your neighbor. As such, there is a good use for each of them. For example, old Jacob, also known as Israel, seeks to have his son Benjamin back. Benjamin is held in bondage down in Egypt. Jacob tells the others to take a gift to the man holding him. Judah, whose descendant will be Jesus the Christ, the Royal Ruler of the tribe of Judah, goes down to gain the freedom of his brother. Now, unbeknownst to them, the man is his long lost son, Joseph. The Bible records the gifting thusly: "Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds'" (Genesis 43:11).

Follow the myrrh, for God will not abandon His people. He comes down in order to go down to the land of bondage. He goes down in order to lead His Church out of the land of bondage and through the wilderness and to the promised land. Out of Egypt has the Father called the Son and the Son has brought His congregation forth through the saving baptism in the Red Sea and at the supper of the LORD's Passover in the wilderness.

Follow the myrrh, for it will take you into the Presence of Jehovah. Myrrh was used to anoint the place where Jehovah was present with His people. Or, as the prophet records what ...

"the LORD said to Moses, 'Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred and fifty, and of aromatic cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be. And you shall anoint with it the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the laver and its base; you shall

consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests. And you shall say to the people of Israel, This shall be My holy anointing oil throughout your generations. It shall not be poured upon the bodies of ordinary men, and you shall make no other like it in composition; it is Holy, and it shall be Holy to you'" (Exodus 30:22-32).

Then, in the Holy Place, the confession is chanted for centuries ...

"Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity;
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New Testament Joseph is with the Christ Child, waiting - waiting for what he has no idea. Unbeknownst to the carpenter, an angel is about to visit him again with the urgent message to flee in the night and take the Infant High Priest down to Egypt. Unbeknownst to Mary's husband, magi from the East are traveling in a caravan bearing gifts for the newborn King of Creation. When the wisemen went into the House where God was present, "they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

Years later, after King Herod died, the young High Priest Jesus, though still a boy, leads His little congregation of two or three in another exodus from the land of the pyramids. "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son'" (Matthew 2:15).

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Follow the myrrh another two or three decades. If you do, you will be taken to a place named Golgotha. There Jesus is offered myrrh by unbelievers and He refuses such a faithless offering. It happened when our Redeemer was on the cross and the soldiers of the battalion "offered Him wine mingled with myrrh; but He did not take it" (Mark 15:23). Jesus is not receiving any offerings on the cross; rather, He is the only offering there. Behold, the High Priest is sacrificing Himself for the sins of those who crucified Him and not for them only, but for the sins of the world. It is the bitterness of sin that He will taste with His Body and Soul, not the bitterness of the myrrh on the tongue and the palate. Jesus would not permit Himself to be drugged into a stupor. He will be fully conscious as He tasted death that you may have life.

Included in the world's sins for which Christ Jesus sacrificed Himself are your sins, including the misuse of His good gift of myrrh, the good gift of sexuality or your new life as a Christian ... everything that you have misused in the service of sin ... the internet, alcohol, money, education, pain pills, the Bible, the office of being a parent, real estate, words, social security, music and any other of God's good creation. Know this night that you have nothing to fear concerning Judgment Day for "Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"

(Ephesians 5:2).

Jesus goes down to the land of bondage and when Satan has been defeated and all sins are atoned for and the wrath of God is completed vented on Him, Jesus dies. Body and soul are separated as the myrrh-laced curtain of the temple is "torn in two, from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38). There remains but one enemy left to be destroyed, death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Follow the myrrh in the service of the repentant faithful. Listen to the Word, for "after this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away His body. Nicodemus also, who had at first come to Him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:38-42).

Now the body of God placed in the tomb did not need the myrrh, for the LORD had promised in a "psalm, 'Thou wilt not let Thy Holy One see corruption'" (Acts 13:35). But it was the custom and this the disciples did.

Besides, at this point, the disciple had not understood that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. Even so, they did a marvelous thing in preparation not for His Body to remain in the tomb to this day, but in preparation for the Resurrection of the High Priest on Easter morning. On that eighth day, Jesus completes His Exodus out of the land of bondage; that is, from the still tomb of death. Following the myrrh will bring us to Easter Sunday when the Church sings, "Who Is This That Comes from Edom?" and answer, "Jesus, Christ it is; of Sabaoth LORD and there's none other god. The faithful ask, "What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?" (Song of Songs 3:6) and answer, that it is the Bridegroom with the Bride, that is, the LORD and His Church. Until that day we are to remain faithful and to be His witnesses. Therefore,

"thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

The answer? It's our confession of Christ and is the sermon text for this evening:

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