



Balta Lelija

8. April 2021

“A time of comfort”

*Acts 3:11-26*

*Everyone came running towards them in great excitement, to the Portico of Solomon, as it is called, where the man was still clinging to Peter and John. When Peter saw the people he addressed them, 'Men of Israel, why are you so surprised at this? Why are you staring at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or holiness? It is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate after he had given his verdict to release him. It was you who accused the Holy and Upright One, you who demanded that a murderer should be released to you while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are witnesses; and it is the name of Jesus which, through faith in him, has brought back the strength of this man whom you see here and who is well known to you. It is faith in him that has restored this man to health, as you can all see. 'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing; but this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, and so that the Lord may send the time of comfort. Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus, whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets. Moses, for example, said, "From among your brothers the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me; you will listen to whatever he tells you. Anyone who refuses to listen to that prophet shall be cut off from the people." In fact, all the prophets that have ever spoken, from Samuel onwards, have predicted these days. 'You are the heirs of the prophets, the heirs of the covenant God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed in your descendants". It was for you in the first place that God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you as every one of you turns from his wicked ways.'*

It is faith that releases God's action. We hear this again and again - today, too, when Peter tells the bystanders why the paralytic was healed. He does not do this without making it clear to them what wrong was done to Jesus, the author of life.

But we see that Peter does not dwell too long on describing the situation, but calls for repentance and even says that the Jews had acted out of ignorance.

This again is an important lesson for us on how to deal with sin - our own and others. It takes a clear realisation of what is wrong, what is sinful, and this should not be avoided. But then it is necessary to turn to God's mercy and to change one's ways, that is, to repent.

What applies to ourselves applies even more to our attitude towards other people. We can objectively determine the injustice, but we cannot measure the degree of guilt. Perhaps the other person acted out of ignorance or felt forced to do so by circumstances, actually wanted to do something good and the opposite came out. We should therefore not immediately accuse the other person of having acted out of pure malice. Unfortunately, this can happen, but it is not the case in all cases. The devil however acts with fundamentally evil motivation.

So one should not fall into two mistakes:

- a) We should not assume from the outset that people who objectively do wrong have always an evil intention, but we should take a closer look at what the motivation may have been. This is what Peter did in today's example. If we cannot discern the motive, then we simply leave it to the Lord.
- b) However, we must not overlook or relativise the objective wrong that was committed because of our “understanding of the person and his motives”, i.e. we must not belittle the requirement of what is objectively right.

The apostle's powerful proclamation invites the bystanders to accept, after their act of repentance, “the time of comfort” which the Lord will give.

This is a wonderful concept. For how much guilt can weigh on a person or even on nations! One breathes heavily under a burden, one's gait is not really free and one seems depressed. Maybe you don't even notice it because you are used to living under a burden. But when the Lord sets you free, then it is the “time to of comfort, a time to breathe freely”. One has the impression that one is now really living and can step out.

I am thinking, for example, of the burden of abortion that now lies over many peoples, the yoke that they put on themselves - it is not the yoke of the Lord. Most people who abort their children will not really know what they are doing. But the

objective burden weighs heavily, so that the peoples who legalise and therefore promote abortion live under a shadow without realising it!

What a sigh of relief would come if the delusion were dissolved, the guilt and the aberration were recognised, repentance took place and infinite mercy released man from the chains!

It is necessary to proclaim the Gospel so that people can see in the light of God how much God is willing to forgive. They only have to lift their eyes and look into the face of the Crucified and Risen One. Then the cover will lift from their eyes, the ice that has settled around the heart will melt, the Lord will take away the burden, and the “times of comfort” have come.