

The Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession

St. John 15:1-11

June 25th, 2017

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Greenville, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Abide in Me

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Lord + Jesus Christ says, "Abide in Me." But this is not so much command as it is promise. Our Lord uses the illustration of a vine. The Vinedresser, our heavenly Father, plants the Vine into the vineyard, the world. The Son of God leaves His throne on High and out of His great love for His Father, the Vinedresser, and for us, He humbles Himself to be born out of the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Vine that is planted into the world—our Lord + Jesus Christ Who dwells among us in the flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil—produces branches. The Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments grafts us, and all those who believe on Christ, into the Vine. The branches get their life from the Vine. We get our faith and life from being grafted into our Lord + Jesus Christ.

This is why it is not enough to say, "we have a relationship with Christ." Or, to say, "The Lord + Jesus is in my life." Our Lord is not just in our life, He *is* our life. Without Him we are unable to do anything. Without Him we are dead in our sins and trespasses. Without Him we can do no good work. Without Him we have no faith, no life, no salvation. A branch cannot be alive if it is just sitting next to the vine. It will die. For, it is receiving nothing to sustain its life from the vine. The branch and the vine are one plant; that is how connected they are. One does not look at a vine and say, "Look at that vine and those branches." No, they say look at that vine.

This is the relationship that we have with Christ. We have been so united to Him through the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, that we are a part of Him and get our life and salvation through Him. Therefore, when our Lord says to abide in Him, He is simply reminding us that He is the Vine and we are the branches, and that there is life in Him, but apart from Him there is no life, but only death and hellfire.

Branches that do not bear fruit are cut away from the Vine. The fruit that the branches bear is the fruit of faith. Faith must be nurtured by its life in Christ. We must abide in hearing the preaching of the Word. We must abide by daily remembering our Holy Baptism. We must abide in the Vine by confessing our sins and receiving absolution from the Pastor as if from God Himself. We must abide in the Vine, by eating the Body of that Vine and drinking the Blood of that Vine in the Lord's Supper. We must abide in the Vine by gathering together in the Name of the Vine to hear His Word and confess our faith as united branches of the Vine. It is through these means of grace that the Holy Ghost works diligently to keep and preserve us in the one, true, faith.

When we neglect our use of these gifts of God, or worse, we use them but disdain them, thinking they do not do anything for us, and just go through the motions whenever they are put before us, we are in danger of being cut off from the Vine. Branches that stop bearing the fruit of faith are cut off and thrown into the fire.

There are many in the Church who claim to profess the truth, but in reality, they turn the truth of God's Word into a lie. There are those who deny the history of a six-day creation. There are those who deny that Jonah was actually swallowed by a large fish. There are those who cut out of the Ten Commandments certain sins, saying it is somehow God-pleasing to have an abortion, or be a homosexual, or desire to be a different sex than what you were born as. These false teachers are trying to live as branches apart from the Vine. For they do not get their teachings from the Vine. They claim to be a part of the Vine, but the heavenly Father has cut them off of the Vine and they will be burned in eternal fires of Hell.

Today we celebrate the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. It was on this day, June 25th, in 1530—487 years ago—that the Protesting Estates made their good confession before Emperor Charles V and the Roman pontiffs. These men made this good confession not knowing whether or not they would lose their lives. But their desire to remain true to the Vine outweighed any fear they may have had at losing their lives. They knew what it meant to abide in the Lord. It meant proclaiming His Word in its truth and purity and administering the sacraments according to Christ's institution, even when doing so was a hazard to their lives. Their desire was to abide as branches in the One, True Vine and to receive the gifts and promises of Heaven from the Vine, even in the midst of false teachers that sought to have them killed.

How things have changed among those who use the name of Lutheran! So many so-called Lutheran Church bodies desire not to be faithful to the Vine, but to cultural relevancy. They want the world to love them. They think, incorrectly, that if they are culturally relevant, that the people will flock to them. However, even if that was true—which it is not—the people would not be flocking to the Vine, but to a show, or to a self-help guru, or to some pleasant-sounding person. They would not be coming to hear the truth.

Our Old Adam naturally does not want anything to do with the truth. It does not want to have anything to do with our Lord. It does not want to be a part of the Vine. It wants to be its own branch. But, being a branch a part from the Vine is an eternal death sentence.

This is why when our Lord says to "Abide in me," He is reminding us to Whom we belong. We are branches who are part of the Vine. We are not just associated with Christ, or just have Christ in our life, or just have a personal relationship with Christ, we are *in* Christ. We are part of the Vine. When our heavenly Father looks at us, He sees that we are branches of the Vine and that we bear good fruit—the fruit of faith. And because we live in faith, and trust our Lord and Redeemer, we produce good works. For His love of the Vinedresser, His heavenly Father, flows through Him, the Vine, to us, the branches. His love becomes our love. We love because He loved first.

And according to this love we continue to cling to His Word of truth. We cling to the pure preaching of the Word and we cling to His Blessed Sacraments, for we learn from the Vine that they give us life, and preserve us in life.

We are not called to be culturally relevant. We are called to be faithful. We are called by our Lord to "abide" in Him. Abide in Him. Abide in His Word. Abide in His means of grace. You are branches of the Vine, our Lord + Jesus Christ. He gives you life. He gives you faith to believe on Him. He gives you all the gifts that He won for you on the tree of the holy cross. And, He invites you to enjoy all these gifts

by proclaiming to you, "Abide in Me." Abide in the Lord + Jesus Christ and you will receive the crown of eternal life Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.