

Exaudi
St. John 15:26—16:4
May 13th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When the Helper Comes

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.

It is the Church's lot is to suffer persecution. That great deceiver, Satan, prowls about constantly like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour with his lies and corruption of the truth of the Word of God. The Church suffers persecution from within and from without.

Within the Church there are many false and pernicious teachers who corrupt the Word of God. Ruled by Satan and his lies, they distort the Word of God to fit their own whims; they call that which is good and holy, especially the Ten Commandments and what we learn about obedience to God's Law and will, evil. And they call evil, especially when they listen to our society and culture about abortion—the murder of unborn babies—referring to it as a choice. And the same is true of homosexuality—which is the not just a breaking of the Sixth Commandment regarding fidelity to one's spouse but is also the pinnacle of a breaking of the First Commandment (Thou shalt have no other gods before me), for it makes of the individual a god unto himself; whatever pleases him to do, he shall do. These abominations of homosexuality and abortion are referred to by those within the Church as something good and pleasing to God. Can you see how the devil has twisted the very Words of holy Scripture to say something that the One True Triune God never intended to say? It appears that the lies and deception that occurred in the Garden of Eden are still going on today.

The Church also suffers persecution from without. For, those who venture to stand up and speak against such things are attacked *ad hominem*, that is, they are attacked according to their person, not according to their statement or opinion. We are attacked in our person, *ad hominem*, by being called all sorts of horrible things: intolerant, bigot, homophobe, right wing nut-job. All of which is meant to disregard the argument and deflect it onto something else—our person. The Word of God is castigated by the outside world. Although this should not surprise those of us within the Church, for the world is the devil's kingdom. Let us never forget that this is his domain, at least for the time, until our Lord + Jesus Christ returns and restores the Kingdom of God on the Last Day. And because this is devil's domain, the Church will continue to suffer persecution until that Last Day. History bears this truth out. All one needs to do is refer to the martyrologies of those who gave their lives in defense of the truth of God's Word.

The Apostles, who in our text for today are being instructed by the Lord + Jesus and are being told by Him that they would be "*put out of the synagogues,*" endured precisely that. Their greatest

persecution came at the hands of their own kinsmen—their own brothers and family. Sure, many of them would eventually die at the hands of Gentiles, but being persecuted by those we love the most and care for the most is an especially egregious persecution, for we expect those with whom we share a common bond to uphold the same beliefs that we do. This is why it is so hurtful to those of us in the Church when those who claim to be members of the One True Church act contrary to God's Word and will and preach all sorts of false doctrine; when they call good, evil and evil, good. It is painful to us, for we expect these, who claim to study God's Word, that they would uphold the same truth as we do. But, when they spread the lies of the devil, and court "the will of the people," it hurts us, for it hurts the Church, and makes the place where truth is to be found just one more social gathering place.

The Church is not a social gathering place; it is not Facebook or Twitter, where people gather to share their opinions and pontificate about things they really have little knowledge about. No! The Church is the place where sinners, who have repented of their sin and seek forgiveness, gather around the Word of God and implore the Almighty, Heavenly Father for forgiveness, on account of the righteousness of Christ, which He won for us and all mankind on the tree of the holy Cross. The Church is the place where we gather around the Word of God, and hear it preached in its truth and purity apart from the lies and deception of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which desires to cling to the lies of the world and the devil. And the Church is the place where the Blessed Sacraments that our Lord + Jesus Christ gifted to us are administered according to His institution, for the creating and sustaining of our faith through the work of the "*Helper*," the Holy Ghost.

And, because we desire the Church to be such a place—a place where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity (even against the lies of the world), and a place where the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, we will suffer persecution. In a sense, we will be "*put out of the synagogues*." Indeed, for some of us, this may have already happened. For, in our former associations with larger synods, the false teachings of those with whom we were to be in fellowship, were not only NOT chastised and removed, but in some cases were praised as being good and holy. And because this became untenable to us, we were forced to leave, even if in the end we were the ones who made the final decision to cut ties with our former associations.

Yes, we do suffer persecution in this life, both in our lives in the world and our lives in the Church, but today's Gospel offers us great comfort; our Lord + Jesus Christ gives us great comfort through today's pericope, for He speaks to us of the Holy Ghost—the Helper.

The immediate question that should come into our minds should be, "What good does the Holy Ghost do for us?" Well, the Helper, the Holy Ghost, is the person of the Holy Trinity, Who gives us comfort and help through this life of persecution. "How does He do that," you may ask? He gives the Church—all those who cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ and His True Word in faith—faith and life. It is the Holy Ghost who works through the means of grace to create and sustain in all those of us in the Church faith and life. The Holy Ghost through the preached Word from the mouth of the pastor proclaims the truth of God's Word, offers forgiveness, and teaches us that amidst persecution we can endure, for we have a Helper Who helps us in all times of trial. This is why the first part of every Divine Service is concluded with preaching, that we might be told through the lips of the Minister that we have a One and True Savior in the Lord + Jesus Christ, Who today tells His disciples and us that He is sending us the help and comfort of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost through the waters of Holy Baptism washes away all sin from us so that when we come before the throne of God, we are worthy to approach Him and give Him thanks and praise, not because of anything that we have done or will do, but purely by His grace and mercy which He bestows upon us in the waters of Holy Baptism. This is why the Divine Service, always begins with the Words of Invocation. We remind ourselves Whose Name we bear, and that because He has called us out of darkness into light, and washed away all our sins, we, as His children, may approach Him as

dear children approach their dear fathers. And when we are reminded of our Holy Baptism, and that we are His children, we are comforted, for we know that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And that although we may suffer persecutions in this life, He will take us to our eternal home in Heaven, when He comes for us on the Last Day.

The Holy Ghost, the Helper, also gives us comfort and help from our greatest infirmity—sin—through the Words of the Absolution. This also takes place towards the beginning of every Divine Service. Having reminded ourselves of Whose Name we bear, we kneel in humility and confess before our Triune God, that we have not kept His Law and will perfectly, and that we, through the help of the Holy Ghost, desire to live according to His commandments, and we entreat His mercy and grace upon our failure to keep His Law and will, and that He would grant us grace on account of our Lord + Jesus Christ's works. Then we hear from the lips of the Minister, the very words of absolution; we hear the very words of forgiveness of God Almighty from the very lips of the pastor, who is a sinner just like us, proclaiming us forgiven on account of our Lord's works. And when we hear this word of forgiveness we are comforted for we know that God no longer considers our sins, or views us as individuals deserving of punishment, but sees only His Son + Jesus Christ, and His righteousness draped over us. This is why we have such comfort when we do not consider our righteousness or our failed righteousness, but instead cling solely to the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus Christ, for His righteousness grants us forgiveness, life and salvation through the Holy Ghost, the Helper.

We conclude the Divine Service, by celebrating the Lord's Supper. Having reminded ourselves of Whose Name we bear and having heard that our sins are forgiven on account of Christ and His righteousness and having heard the Word that we have a One and Only Savior in Christ + Jesus, we gather together at this altar, kneel and receive His true Body and Blood given in bread and wine, and the Holy Ghost through these means strengthens our faith, and creates and sustains in us fervent love for the Triune God and for each other. This is why we call this meal a fellowship meal, for not only are those who are truly in fellowship gathered together at this altar to receive and share in this meal, but it creates and sustains true fellowship under our One Head Christ. We are united with the whole True Church on Earth and in Heaven. This is what the Holy Ghost does through these simple means of bread and wine, He makes us One Body of Christ, who rejoice in One Holy Baptism, and share One Faith, and One Hope.

This gives us the greatest comfort and help of all in this life of persecution, for we know that those with whom we commune, will offer us help; we know that those with whom we commune share in our persecutions, and are able to offer us true comfort for they know our weaknesses, for they share in our weaknesses and possess the same weaknesses, and they also know the only and true place to look for comfort in these weaknesses and are able to direct us, when we suffer persecution to the true place of comfort—our Lord + Jesus Christ and the gifts that He bestows upon us through the Holy Ghost, the Helper. This sharing of our cares and sorrows; of our hopes and joys is another means of grace. This is what is referred to in the Smalcald Articles as the "mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren." It is whenever two or three (and that two can mean just preacher and someone to hear and receive), whenever they are gathered together, there Christ is in the midst of them. Whenever two or three gathers around the Word of God and the Sacraments, and celebrates the Divine Service, there Christ is with them, and there the Holy Ghost, the Helper is also working through these means of grace to give us hope and joy in the midst of persecution, for our persecution lasts but for a few years, and then we will have eternal joy. We will only have to endure the false teachings of those who listen to the devil's lies, and endure the intolerance of this evil world, for a short time, and then we will have eternal life gathered around the Lamb and hear His Word proclaimed, and proclaim it ourselves, truthfully for all eternity.

Therefore, let us rejoice that we endure suffering and persecution in this lifetime; let us rejoice that we have the opportunity to proclaim the truth of God's Word amidst the lies of false brethren and

amidst the lies of this false world. For we know that when we remain faithful to preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity and we administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution, and when we gather faithfully around those men who preach and do such things, and cling to a Church body that upholds these things, we know that the Holy Ghost, the Helper is strengthening our faith, and creating in us hope and life and joy. 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.

Soli Deo gloria!