

Midweek Lenten Vespers
St. John 8:42-51
March 7th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Who Is of God Hears God's Word

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.

In this evening's Gospel there is no room for a gray area. You are either right or wrong. You are either in sin, or in grace. Everything is black and white for the Lord. You are either of your father the devil, the father of all lies, or you are of your Father in Heaven. This all depends on to whom you listen? Do you listen to lies? Or do you listen to the truth? What is more important to your ears? What is God's will, or what is your own will?

Those who are of their father the devil listen to their own heart. They are just like their father the devil, the lord of lies. They are obsessed with their own wishes and desires. They have no need for truth. Truth to them is not absolute, but whatever they make it out to be. Truth to them comes in "varying degrees of truth." To them there is no one, absolute, and overall truth. Truth to them is whatever they make it to be.

These are the people who really have no use for God's word, or what God says, because their ends justify whatever means they take upon themselves. The Lord + Jesus says it in plain words, "*Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.*" This is seen in Churches today by people who want to throw out the liturgy, or throw out sound doctrine, or sing songs and hymns that are at best weak in theology, or at worst, have no good theology in them at all. Everything is done for their own senses and emotions and feelings. What God says, or what He teaches takes a back burner all for the lie of "getting people into the pews." To them God's word doesn't matter, because just like their father the devil, they speak from their own "*resources.*"

What the Lord + Jesus is saying in the Gospel is that the children of the devil, are only concerned about their own will, and have no need for the will of God.

Now before you are tempted into thinking, "I'm not one of those children of the devil"; before you start excusing yourself, and start thinking you are in the right, let me tell you something, because I've got bad news for you. According to our sinful nature, we are all children of Satan, children of the devil. Who of us, has not, at one time or the other, sought our own will in one thing or another? I think we would be hard pressed to not find at least one instance where we have desired only what we want, regardless of what Christ's word has to say to us. If you don't believe that you are capable of such behavior, then perhaps you should observe a 2-year-old child sometime. They are especially

gifted at seeking their own will. And I'm sure we've all seen a temper tantrum from one of these "innocent" young tykes. Just remember that you were that temper-tantrum-having 2-year-old once. Let's be honest with ourselves even more, some of us still do have temper tantrums—ranting and raving, and pouting and shouting all to get our own will. This seems to be the case among many millennials.

We are of our father the devil, because we seek our own will, or own way, because we refuse to listen to what God has to say or perform his will. When we are told the truth of God's word, our impenitent hearts reject it, and replace it with something of our own choosing, whether that be our own works, or whether it be the message of false preachers, or success, fame and fortune, or our status in life and in the parish, anything we trust in as truth, apart from the Cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

And my dear friends, there is only one Truth. There is only One Who is the True Son of His Father, and that person is the Lord + Jesus. Only the Lord + Jesus does His Father's will fully and completely. He is the only One Who fulfills the Law perfectly. He is the only One Who offers up His life in our place, for people who hated and despised Him, just because His Father wanted Him to do so.

There in is the message of the Cross. The Lord + Jesus dies for those who are the children of the devil. He does His Father's will; He obeys His Father's word. He listens to the truth, He hears the truth, and does it, all because of His great love for His Father, and for us.

The Jews accused the Lord + Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon. Such is the response of the children of the devil, to disregard the message of the Cross, the moment we hear it. Some people reject it outright and say it just a fairy tale. Others believe that it is true, but then disregard it by their actions, they don't show they believe it in how they live their life. It means nothing for their salvation. They don't have faith in the Cross as their salvation, and therefore they create a whole list of works for themselves to do in order for them to believe that God loves them. They have turned the truth of the Cross on its head and made it a lie. For them it is no longer the only means of salvation, but just a step along the way.

For them they have a hard time placing their sins at the foot of the Cross. They cannot repent, and leave all their sins at the Cross, for they treasure their works too much. Their works have become their God, and when works become your god, you no longer have need of the Cross and Christ's sacrifice for you. And your father the devil carries you away into falsehood and lies, and leaves you to die spiritually, slowly wasting away unfed by God's Word and grace.

This is where the Lord + Jesus steps in and rescues you. He, having listened to, and having heard God's Word, goes to the Cross for you, to suffer and die for you, and on the third day rise again for you. And having done all of this, establishing for us the promise of our salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life in His work on the Cross alone, He then sends us His Holy Ghost to comfort us and keep us in this Truth; to keep us in His promises, so that we do not slowly die spiritually, and waste away, but are continually fed with His Word, through Preaching and the Sacraments. By these means, the Holy Ghost casts out of us the devil, who fills us with lies. The Holy Ghost opens our ears to hear the truth of God's love and salvation. He creates and sustains faith in the Lord + Jesus Christ alone as our Savior. He washes us, and purifies us, and cleanses us, cleaning out our ears to hear His holy Word. He opens our eyes to behold the crucifixion of the Lord + Jesus Christ, the suffering and death of an innocent man, Who was the only One to uphold the Truth, Who offered up His life as a sacrifice for us.

The Holy Ghost has called us, and enlightened us, and gathered us, and strengthened us in this One, True Faith, so that we are now no longer children of the devil, but are now Children of our Heavenly Father, God Almighty, and brothers and sisters with His One and Only Son, the Lord + Jesus Christ. Can you see in this text how the Triune God, works together to call us out of darkness into light? Can you see how much love the Triune God has for each one of us, even though; we have all been selfish and sought our own way? He forgives us of our sin and leads us back to trust in His word of truth and in His sacraments as our spiritual food for this life.

The Holy Ghost is here even now, working through the preaching of the word to call you out of falsehood, back into the truth. Convicting us and leading us to repentance, so that we may seek His will, and listen to His Word. So that we might rejoice in His work of salvation, and find true peace and joy in Him alone, not worried about what lies are being told about us, or the Church, or how we have to change things to grow, or how we have to sing hymns with poor theology in order to put people into the pews. These are all lies of the devil. By our Holy Baptisms, we are no longer children of the devil, but are children of God. We listen to Him, we trust in Him. He will take care of us and provide for us. But He can do nothing for us, if we refuse to listen to Him, and heed His Word. If we are intent on listening to our father the devil, then all the preaching in the world is not going to bring us back, because we have put ourselves in a position of impenitence and are refusing the counsel of the Holy Ghost.

But just like with the Jews in His time, Christ keeps preaching to us, trying to get through to us to lead us into repentance, to open up our ears to hear His Word and to trust in Him alone. This is why the Holy Ghost speaks into our ears tonight these words, to lead us out of darkness into light; to open our blind eyes, so that we might see clearly the glory of the crucifixion of our Lord + Jesus Christ has our source of salvation and hope. To the Cross of Jesus is where we are to look whenever sins assail us. That is after all the theme of this week: *Oculi*. “*My eyes are ever on the Lord.*” It is taken from the Introit from this past Sunday. “*My eyes are ever on the Lord.*” This is where our eyes are to be fixed—upon the crucifixion of our Lord + Jesus; upon our sinfulness and our lack of strength and power to overcome sin and temptation, which nailed Him to the Cross. Our eyes are to be upon the suffering and death of Christ, which won for each one of us forgiveness, life and salvation. On our suffering Lord and His Cross of death is where our hope is to be centered. It is in this promise, that by our Lord’s death, we have eternal life, where we can have true comfort and joy.

It is in this crucifixion of our Lord + Jesus, where those who were children of the devil, were purchased and bought, to become children of God. My dear friends, we are those children, rescued from sin, death, and the devil, to live with our heavenly Father, for all eternity; rescued from the lies of the devil, to hear the One and only Truth of His holy Word, in this life and the next. By this preaching of the Holy Ghost, and the out-pouring of His Word into our ears, may we join with the hymnist and sing, “*The will of God shall be my pleasure While here on Earth is mine abode; My will is wrong beyond all measure, It doth not will what pleaseth God. The Christian’s motto e’er must be: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.*” 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!