

Judica

St. John 8:46-59

March 18th, 2018

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Before Abraham Was, I AM

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.

We hear in Holy Scripture that our Lord planned our salvation before He even formed the foundations of the Earth. Our Lord tells the leaders of the Temple the same thing today. "Before Abraham was, I AM. He was before Abraham. He was before Noah. He was before Cain and Abel. He was before Adam and Eve and all of creation. He is from eternity. He has no beginning and end according to His Divine nature. He is from eternity, but before He created anything on this earth, He planned our souls' salvation.

This is why He tells Abraham to get out of the country he was dwelling in; to go to the land of promise; the land in which our Lord + Jesus Christ was to be born. The land in which HE was going to be born. In the land of Israel, in the city of Bethlehem, the baby + Jesus was born, as we celebrated during the Christmas season. This boy, after escaping to and returning from Egypt just like His ancestors did, and we are studying about now in Bible class, lived and grew in Nazareth. He lived a simple life. He had simple parents. He was a carpenter's son; the son of Joseph. Everyone who knew Him in Nazareth, knew from what a lowly family He had come. Even during His three-year ministry people could still look and say, "There is His mother Mary, and His brothers and sisters." There was nothing outwardly special or heroic or grand about Him.

This man, our Lord + Jesus, even though there was nothing special about His appearance or upbringing is the second Person of the Trinity Who planned our salvation before the formation and foundation of the world.

For this reason, Abraham rejoiced to see His day. Abraham rejoiced to see the day when mankind would have the long-promised Savior born for them. The promise that was given to Him through the promised birth of his son Isaac. This same promise was given both to his son and his grandson; to Isaac and Jacob, as we have seen in our study of the Book of Genesis. But, how does Abraham see it? Is he not supposed to be dead? Has he not been dead for centuries by this time? As our Lord confirmed to the Sadducees in His last week before His death, God is the God of the living not of the dead. Abraham is alive in Heaven. Moses and Elijah are alive in Heaven. Just as we bore witness to when we celebrated the Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord. Moses and Elijah joined our Lord + Jesus on the mount, with Sts. Peter, James and John, to discuss His upcoming crucifixion and resurrection.

The saints in Heaven know about our Lord's work of redemption for mankind. They wait and watch for it to happen for those of us living still on the earth. Just as they now wait and watch with us for the Lord's day of Judgment, when all the saints on Earth will finally be rescued from our tormentors of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, and we will be free from all the consequences of sin in this world. And on that day all the saints on Earth and in Heaven will be given new and glorious bodies. These sad sacks of worm food which we wear now will be changed into new and glorious bodies that will last for all of eternity in Heaven. This is the plan that our Lord established before He even began to create the earth and the heavens and all that dwell within them.

This is what He tells the Jews in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. John. They, however, did not want to hear it. They knew what He was saying. They knew that He was confessing to be the Messiah, the One sent from God to redeem His people. However, they did not want this man to be their Messiah. They thought they could stop the actions of God by picking up stones to throw at Him and kill Him. But this is not what God intends. This is not the death that our Lord + Jesus Christ would endure. The Lord + Jesus was destined for the tree of the holy cross. Therefore, the Lord + Jesus passed through the midst of them unharmed.

But more importantly, it shows what it is like for unbelievers. They do not want the Lord + Jesus to be their Savior—their Messiah and Redeemer. It also shows us how corrupt the Jews in the Temple truly are, for they knew exactly what the Lord was confessing. They had seen the signs. They had seen the wonders that He had done. They had seen the prophecies being fulfilled by this man + Jesus, but they did not want Him to be their Savior or Messiah. This is the way it is with all unbelievers. They want someone or something else to be their savior and god. They do not want the ONLY Person Who can be their Savior be the source of their salvation.

Or worse, they do not even care about being saved. They think wrongly that they need to salvation, that their good deeds will be enough on the Last Day. This is one of those silly Jewish notions that we so prevalent in our society today, that no one is going to Hell, and if they are then they REALLY deserve it. As long as you are basically good, you will end up in Heaven. But this is not what Holy Scripture teaches. Salvation is for those who cling to our Lord + Jesus and His cross and Passion in faith that their sins are forgiven by Him, and not by anything that they have done. The world does not want to hear this, though. They want salvation to be on their terms, just like the Jews in today's Gospel reading. They do not want the Lord + Jesus to be their savior. They want their own gods to save them. No salvation will be coming from their gods, however. They will be just as condemned to Hell as these Jews from the Gospel, unless they repent and believe the promises of our Lord + Jesus Christ: that He has come to be their Redeemer and offer up His life as a ransom for their sins on the tree of the holy cross.

This warning is not just for those who are outside the Church. It should also serve as a warning to us. For we all have our little gods that prevent us from reading and studying God's word or praying at even the most common of times—before and after meals and when we get up in the morning and before we go to bed at night. These are things which we should take time in our daily lives to do, but there are times when our so-called hobbies, interfere with our study of God's Word. They may even interfere with our being able to come to this holy house and worship with our fellow Christians and receive the Lord's Body and Blood for our forgiveness. If this is the case—if we have things keeping us from daily reading and studying God's Word and daily praying to our Lord—then we need to evaluate whether they are really for our good. Anything that keeps us from joining our fellow Christians in worship is something we should seriously think about getting rid of, because it is harmful to our faith and to our worship of the One, True Triune God. It is harmful, because it is a rejection of the gifts that our Lord would have us enjoy.

It is here in this place that our Lord hands out His gifts. It is here where forgiven, life and salvation are being given to all who come. And when we come in faith, we receive the gifts that our Lord would like us to enjoy. The gifts that He planned for us, and all mankind, to have and enjoy before He even laid the foundations of the world.

We will hear more of our Lord's great work in these coming days as we prepare for Holy Week. Our Lord's Passion will be our focus. He planned before the world's foundation to suffer and die for His creation. This is how much He loves us. For if He did not love us, He would not have even bothered creating us. Why create something that is going to disobey you and reject you? Because you love it that much. You love it so much that you are willing to do anything for it, even lay down your life for it. This is the love that our Lord + Jesus, and the Father and the Holy Ghost have for you. Even though He knew that we would disobey and reject Him, He still created us, and He planned to offer up Himself as the means to buy us back from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Take comfort in that love for you. Take comfort in our Lord's work of redemption for you. He planned your salvation even before Abraham, even before Noah, even before Adam and Eve or any of creation. We get to come to this holy house and give Him thanks for His great love for us. We give Him thanks simply by receiving His gifts—His Word and His Sacraments.

Therefore, my dear friends, come to this altar and receive the forgiveness, life and salvation that our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ paid for on the tree of the holy cross on account of His great love for you, which He planned before the foundation of the world. Receive His forgiveness, life and salvation through His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. And rejoice that He loves you enough to come into this world and take upon Himself your punishment, so that you might not have to endure it, but live in joy and happiness for all of eternity in the mansions of Heaven with all the saints. Thanks be to God. 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!