

The Third Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 15:1-10
June 17th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Rejoice with 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.

The first five Sundays after Trinity all possess the theme of God's love for us. And today's text, which wraps up three consecutive parables from the Evangelist St. Luke, is more so than the others. For in this pericope we see the love and compassion that our Lord + Jesus Christ has for us poor, miserable sinners.

We are told by the Evangelist that all the tax collectors and sinners gathered near to Him, in order that they might hear Him. We have in these words a contrast, for immediately following this proclamation, the Evangelist tells us that the Pharisees and scribes grumbled amongst themselves complaining that "*This Man receives sinners and eats with them.*" This is the way it is with the self-righteous, and the sinner. The self-righteous person has no need for those who, in his estimation, do not live up to the legalistic standards of living that he has set for himself and those around him. Not only that, but self-righteous persons have no need for the Lord + Jesus Christ, for they, after all, have their own self-made good works as their god to give them comfort and assurance. Therefore, they do not like it when sinners and so-called hypocrites fill the churches of God, for in their opinion, the Church is supposed to be a holy place, full of holy people, who behave and act holy all the time. In the churches of God, however, such is not the case, as the Church is a beacon and light to those who sit in darkness and in the peril of death on account of their sins. The house of God is a place for sinners.

Therefore, the sinner, knowing his lost condition, is not like the self-righteous person, but instead gathers near to the Lord + Jesus to hear His Word. For the sinner knows that the salvation that they so desperately need and desire can only be found in the Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. There is an irony here. For those who are full of sin—the unholy and spiritually blind—come and seek out the One Who is without sin—perfectly holy, and perfectly sees the will of the Heavenly Father. Why would sinners such as these tax collectors, those who were consumed with the things of this earth and the possession of money, want to be around someone Who only reminded them of how spiritually poor and miserable they really were? Why would sinners want to be around someone Who is holy and righteous? The answer is in the Gospel reading. They came to hear His Word.

It makes one wonder what was so special about His Word. What was He preaching that made the lost come to Him? The answer to this question is answered every time we gather in this holy sanctuary to hear the Words of our Lord proclaimed from the pulpit. Our Lord proclaimed to the lost

and the condemned—to the sinner—that there was life and salvation in Him. And it was only to be found in Him. His Word was a Lamp to light the way out of the darkness of sin and shame, and into the realms of Heaven. His is the only Lamp that lights the way.

This of course, is why the Pharisees and scribes are more concerned with whom our Lord is keeping company, than their own condition. For in trusting solely in their works, and their way of living, they have forsaken the Lord + Jesus Christ. In their mind they need no saving. They need no Lamp to light the way, for they are content to remain in the darkness. They are righteous in their own minds, but they lack the one thing needful for true righteousness, and that is mercy and compassion. For there is a time and place for condemning sin, and wrong doing, and breaking of the law—there is a time and place for the zeal of the Lord's Law. But zeal for what is right and good, should never be confused with prideful and haughty self-righteousness. For those who pride themselves on a self-made righteousness, despise everyone else, and are without compassion for the weak.

But in the pride of the Pharisees and scribes we see the grace and compassion of our Lord, for in the parables that our Lord + Jesus tells to them, he is relating exactly what His love for the world and mankind is all about. There are two parables in today's Gospel reading.

The parables that our Lord tells of a Lost Sheep and a Lost Coin show a progression of thought by our Lord + Jesus Christ. And they show how much our Lord loves His creation. For in the first parable, of the Lost Sheep, the Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine and goes to find the lost sheep. This is both a picture of man's fall into sin, and our Lord's Incarnation, for there are a hundred sheep—a hundred being a number of perfection. This number represents our Lord's creation, that it was good and perfect when He had created it. However, mankind, our Lord's crowning creation, broke His will, and wandered off from the perfection of creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, no longer was there perfection, but now there was one rebellious part of creation, and ninety-nine other parts which did not rebel against God.

Therefore, our Lord in His great grace and mercy leaves His heavenly abode and comes down to Earth in the form of man to bring mankind back into perfection. And our Lord having come to the Lost Sheep, that is, to us, even though we had rebelled and sinned greatly, bears our rebellion upon His shoulders, and carries us back to perfection by placing upon His shoulders, all our guilt and shame of sin, and carrying those sins to the tree of the holy cross. And having borne those sins of us upon His shoulders, and having redeemed us by His holy cross, He gathers together with the angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven to rejoice over the redemption of mankind. And we have a foretaste of that great thanksgiving for redemption in this meal of our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine. The meal in which we remember our Lord's sacrifice for our sins, and how He bore those sins in His Body on the holy cross to redeem us. Here, my dear friends, is the picture of our Lord's love and mercy for you, the Shepherd Who comes to find His lost sheep, and places the sheep upon His shoulders to carry it back to the flock, for it is unable to come back to the flock through its own works and merits. The Lord + Jesus must be the One to bring all lost sheep back into the fold. He does this through His Holy Ghost, Who calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps all those who hear the Word of the Lord in the one, true faith.

The second picture of our Lord's love and mercy for us poor, miserable sinners is the picture of a woman who has lost a silver coin, in the Greek: a drachma, a silver coin of equal value to a denarius, which was a day's wages. This woman, having lost this coin of great worth and value, lights a lamp and sweeps the house diligently to find it. The first parable was a picture of our Lord coming to us, but here in this parable the Lord sends out His Word, the very thing that the tax collectors and sinners came to our Lord + Jesus to hear. The woman in the parable represents the Church and the work of the Holy Ghost, Who lighting the lamp of our Lord's Word, through preaching, sweeps the house of this world to call all sinners to repentance. The sweeping that this woman, Holy Mother Church, does is important.

In the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Greek, the word used for sweeping means to “turn upside down.” What that means is that this “sweeping” is more than just a simple cleaning. The furniture gets moved, appliances are moved out of the way. Couches are lifted. Rugs are removed. The whole house is turned upside down, in order to find this silver coin. This represents the work of the Church, to go into all nations, and to teach them all that He has commanded us, and to baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Church turns the world upside down by preaching a call to repentance and to receive forgiveness, so that all sinners might turn from their sins to the Lord’s saving work on the holy cross; so that all self-righteous might turn from their self-righteousness and humble themselves before the Lord’s cross and realize that they are not saved by their works and merits but by the Lord + Jesus Christ’s alone.

For this reason, the coin is very valuable to the Woman, as are sinners in need of God’s grace to the Church. For a coin has an image and inscription on it. In New Testament times the coin bore the image of the one who gave the coin, most often an emperor or Caesar. Mankind, the Lost Coin that the Woman lights a lamp and searches diligently for, bears the image of his creator, our Lord and Triune God. This is why the Church diligently “sweeps” the whole house of this world to find the lost coins of fallen, sinful man.

There is also another layer to this parable, for the Woman, in lighting the Lamp of God’s Word, seeks to clear away the dirt and grime of sinfulness within mankind. And so, this is also a picture of confession and absolution. For through our repentant confession, the dirt and grime of sin within our soul is exposed, and by absolution, that is, the proclamation of forgiveness of our sins, our souls are made clean and holy once more. When you heard the absolution from the pastor at the beginning of the service, your souls were cleansed of sin, and the Woman, Holy Mother Church, calls all her friends and neighbors, all those who are fellow Christians with you, to rejoice over the forgiveness of your sins. For you have been enlightened by the Word of God and made clean by the sweeping away of your sins by Holy Absolution. This cleansing takes place whenever you confess your sins, and receive God’s absolution from the pastor, as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it, your sins are forgiven by God in Heaven. This is how we daily live out our Holy Baptism, by daily confessing our sins, and thereby daily drowning the Old Adam within us, so that we may arise each day as a clean and new creation before our Lord. This, my dear friends, is the second picture of our Lord’s love and mercy for you.

Therefore, in these parables, we have our Lord’s redemption for mankind, and the intercession and prayer of the Church for lost sinners as the Lord seeks out us poor, miserable sinners, and lights the way to Him through the preaching of His holy Gospel. We also have in these parables, the means of God’s grace, for we see in them the Lord’s Supper, Absolution, and Holy Baptism. These are the gifts that our Lord + Jesus has given to us to use, in order to give us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, salvation.

But we must beware, for as we heard in the Epistle of St. Peter, there is a lion, the devil, who prowls around seeking who he may devour. In the Gospel reading, the lion is portrayed by the Pharisees and scribes, who would not have the tax collectors and sinners receive the grace and love of God, even though, they did not want it for themselves.

We too, have many in this life, who would take our comfort and peace away by pointing out to us how little we keep the Law of God, and how much we sin; those who would constantly bring up past sins, and deride us for lack of keeping the Law of God. This is what the Pharisees and scribes were doing to the tax collectors and sinners, using their self-proclaimed righteousness to take away the joy and peace that our Lord would give to them through His holy Word. This, of course, is why our Lord shares with us these parables today. To remind us that He has come into the world to redeem sinners. He comes to receive us and eat with us in this blessed meal of His. He has shined the lamp of His holy

Word into the dirt and grime filled recesses of our soul and has cleansed us from all sin and error. And having borne our sins upon the tree of the holy cross and having carried our burdens and sorrows in His Person, He brings us to the Heavenly Father, Who clothes us with the righteousness of His holy Son.

Therefore, let the lion roar and howl as he may. He can harm us none. He is judged, the deed is done. One little Word can fell him. And that Word is "Jesus." You, my dear friends, cannot be harmed, for the Good Shepherd, our Lord + Jesus Christ, watches over you by His Word, and the Woman, Holy Mother Church, offers her prayers of intercession to our Lord on your behalf, asking that your sins be forgiven you, for you have been reconciled to your Heavenly Father by the work of His Son, Who, when this vale of tears is ended, will bring you into His holy Sanctuary, so that you might enjoy for all eternity the feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom, which has no end, for this Man + Jesus, receives sinners like us. He even prepares a celebration feast for us, a foretaste of what is to come in Heaven, so that we might rejoice that our sins have been forgiven. The Lord + Jesus has searched and found us lost sheep, and He has swept the house of the world to find us lost coins, so that we might rejoice with Him and all the angels and archangels, and all the company of Heaven for all eternity. 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!