

Midweek Lenten Vespers 2
St. Luke 22:24-32
March 8th, 2017
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Bestow Upon You A Kingdom

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 disciples in the reading for today argue amongst themselves who among them is the greatest. They are worried about an earthly kingdom. They are worried about a kingdom that does not last, nor is it a kingdom which our Lord + Jesus will establish. Our Lord did not come to establish an earthly kingdom; He did come to establish a temporal kingdom. He came to establish an eternal, heavenly kingdom. His kingdom is a table around which all those in the kingdom enjoy the food of Heaven—His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. It is a kingdom where we enjoy perfect fellowship with each other, but especially with our Lord and Savior.

The kingdom of which we, and the disciples, are a part of is not a kingdom ruled by any of us. It is not a kingdom where we focus on our abilities, gifts and successes. No, it is a kingdom ruled by our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. He won the victory over sin, death and the devil by suffering and dying on the tree of the holy cross after His perfect obedience to the Law and will of His Father in Heaven. It is His kingdom, and we have no right to this kingdom unless He bestows it upon us. However, our Lord's love for us is also a perfect love. He created us. He made us. And, just like we are proud of the things which are produced by our own hands—the food we make, a room or house we build, furniture we may produce, the children to which we gave birth—our Lord also loves His creation.

It is out of that great love for us, that our Lord is willing to suffer all to redeem us. Just like a parent would endure all things for the love of his children. On account of His love for us He bestows upon us a kingdom. He calls us into this kingdom through His holy Word—the promises that are revealed to us through His holy Gospel. He promises us that He has atoned for the sins of the whole world through His death on the cross. He bestows that forgiveness to us through the working of the Holy Ghost. He washes us through Holy Baptism. He forgives our sins through the absolution spoken by the pastor. He feeds us His Body under bread. He quenches our spiritual thirst through His Blood given in wine. He gathers us together under His Name to enjoy fellowship with other Christians, so that we might bear each other's burdens; that we might speak comfort to one another with the Word of God, when we experience trial, suffering, persecution, and trouble in this life.

In our Lord's kingdom, He desires not to be served. This is how the disciples in our Gospel for today would have it. They were arguing over who would serve whom. Who was the top dog? Who was above whom? That temptation happens to us sometimes, when we forget who is the Lord of the Church.

We forget that He is the Lord of us all, and that it is His Church, and that we should listen to and follow Him and what He would desire for us in His Church.

What does our Lord desire for us? The Gospel reading from St. Luke tells us that our Lord desires to serve us. How does He serve us? He serves us by defeating our enemies of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. He serves us by forgiving us of our sin, rescuing us from death, and giving us an eternal life in His eternal kingdom with Him and all the saints who have gone before us.

Satan, however, like he desired to do to St. Peter, desires to sift us as wheat. The devil desire to take us out of the one, true faith. He does not want us to have comfort in our Lord and His Word. He does not want us to hear our Lord's promises that our sins are forgiven on account of Him and His work, and not on account of anything that we do. The devil does not want us to hear that our Lord has saved us from sin, death and him. Satan does not want us to hear about our eternal kingdom which our Lord + Jesus has bestowed upon us through His death and fulfillment of the Law. The devil wants us to be like the disciples who worried who should be in charge. The devil wants us worrying about an earthly, temporal kingdom and desires to take our eyes of faith off of our eternal kingdom in Heaven.

But, our Lord intercedes for us continually before our Father in Heaven. He pleads on our behalf. He serves us by reminding our heavenly Father that He has indeed fulfilled the Law perfectly. He has repaired that which we broke through our disobedience with His perfect obedience. The Law is fulfilled by His perfect obedience to it. And, He reminds His Father in Heaven that the punishment that we deserve on account of our daily and continuous sinning has been paid by His trial, suffering, punishment and death. He went into the grave—He died our death—so that we might have life and have it eternally.

The grave now no longer bears any hold over us. We are freed from the bondage of sin and freed from the prison of the grave. We were slaves to sin and doomed to eternal death, but our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has freed us by entering into our prison; entering into our grave; entering into our bondage, and breaking us out and freeing us so that we might be rescued from the devil's kingdom and brought into His eternal kingdom which He bestowed upon us.

Therefore, let us give thanks to our Lord and Savior for all the good things which He has done for us. For, our kingdom is not of this world, but our kingdom is His eternal kingdom in Heaven. We enjoy a taste of the benefits of this kingdom now, but we will one day enjoy this kingdom in its full glory and joy when our Lord calls us out of this life to our eternal home in 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.