

The Festival of St. Lucia of Syracuse, Virgin and Martyr  
St. Matthew 13:44-52  
December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church  
Greenville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## The Kingdom of Heaven

*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.

As the amount of daylight decreases it is appropriate to celebrate this Festival which we celebrate today—the Festival of St. Lucia of Syracuse, the Virgin and Martyr. For, St. Lucia's very name brings to mind light; that is what Lucia means "light bearer." Therefore, this saint shines forth her light—the light of the testimony of our Lord + Jesus Christ—in these dark days, and she brings us out of the darkness of these days into the light of the Light of the World—the Lord + Jesus. For, St. Lucia not only bears the name of "light bearer," but indeed bore that title to her death being martyred for her steadfast faithfulness to the Word of God and for her love for her Lord + Jesus Christ. She welcomed torture and death that brought her to the heavenly realms of our Lord's eternal light, rather than embrace the darkness of lies and deception of this dark world full of sin, so that she might live longer in this flesh.

She was martyred as a Christian in the year 304 AD on this date—December 13. She was martyred because she had determined to remain a virgin and dedicate her life in service to the Lord. And in the process of doing this she distributed her dowry to the poor and needy, believing that she would no longer need it. However, a suitor who her father had promised her betrothal, when he learned that she had done this brought her before the city Prefect to be tried as a Christian (this still being the time when Christianity was against the law in the Roman world). When she had, therefore, been brought before the judge, and was charged to deny her Lord and Christianity or suffer torture and death, she did not waver in her faith, but boldly proclaimed her Lord—the Light of the World—the Lord + Jesus Christ.

Her torturers poured heated resin and pitch over her, because she would not stop proclaiming the good news of the Lord + Jesus, and continuing to proclaim the Lord throughout her torments, in rage and anger the torturer ran her throat through with a spear, so that she could no longer speak. She died shortly after. She therefore stands as an example of enduring persecution; of remaining steadfast and faithful to the Word of God in the midst of those who with deceitful words or with violent hands would rest the kingdom from out of our hands, and deliver the Church and all those who are born of her into eternal hellfire with those for whom it was prepared.

Her martyrdom teaches us a few things. First, that even though we may endure ridicule and slander in the midst of this dark and sinful world, none of us in this country have endure the sort of torments that St. Lucia of Syracuse endured on behalf of the Word of God. I know that I have never had hot pitch and resin poured over me, or had my throat pierced with a spear. Nor have I, at least to

my knowledge, been threatened with these actions. Therefore, the persecutions that we endure in this evil world are nothing compared to those who offered their lives on behalf of their faith in the Lord + Jesus.

Second, her martyrdom teaches us how to remain faithful, for the Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure hidden in a field, and a pearl of great price which is worth enough to sell all that we have—even our very own life—in order to keep this great treasure which gives us forgiveness, life and salvation.

Third, her martyrdom teaches us that if remain faithful through persecution on behalf of this world, we will obtain an everlasting crown of life; we will be delivered from this dark world and these dark days, and live forever in the eternal light of our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who enlightens the whole world with His Gospel; the Gospel which proclaims that our Lord fulfilled the Law and will of the Father perfectly for us, and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice in our place for our transgressions. This message that our Lord loves us so much that He gave His life for us, that He humbled Himself by putting off His radiant garments of divine majesty and put on our flesh, so that He might redeem it, enlightens our hearts and souls and opens our ears to readily hear with joy the message that even while we were sinners, our Lord redeemed us with His innocent suffering and spilled blood.

St. Lucia also endured suffering and had her blood spilled for her faithfulness to the great treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven. She was gathered into the Church, like us, by the dragnet of the Gospel, and she was gathered into the vessel of Holy Mother Church, just like we have been, and so at the end of her life, she was welcomed into the eternal home of Heaven to proclaim with all the saints and angels for all eternity the good things that our Lord has done for us: that He has forgiven us of all our sins; that He has saved us from sin, death and the devil; and that He will bring us, like St. Lucia, into our eternal home in Heaven, and we will join with St. Lucia of Syracuse, and with all the martyrs and saints and angels in Heaven and proclaim the great things that the Lamb of God—the Light of the World—our Lord + Jesus Christ has done to deliver us from sin which blinds this dark world, so that we might have light to see what great things He accomplished for us and for all mankind on the tree of the holy Cross. 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.