

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 25:31-46
November 19th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Come, You Blessed of My Father

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 Last Day—the day of the Judgment of all mankind—invokes a certain fear in all of us. But for those of us who cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ in faith, it should not. Why? Because our Lord + Jesus holds us in His right hand. We are the sheep of the Lord. We are clothed with His righteousness, by virtue of our Holy Baptisms. We receive His absolution from the pastor, just as if we are receiving it from His very lips. He feeds us with His Body and Blood in bread and wine, to strengthen our faith in Him, and so that through the Holy Ghost, love and charity for Him and our fellow Christians is increased. He preaches His saving Gospel message to us through the lips of His ministers. Therefore, we should not fear the Last Day—the day of Judgment. For, we are under the care and shepherding of our Lord and Redeemer—the Lord + Jesus Christ.

Our Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Matthew starts out with a description of the Last Day. The Son of Man will come in all of His glory, with all of His angels ministering beside Him, and then He will sit on the throne of His glory which is on the right hand of the heavenly Father. All the nations will be gathered before Him—every tribe, and people, and language—all will be gathered before Him. Then comes the part that causes us fear and trepidation: the separation. He will divide the sheep and the goats from each other. Most times we consider ourselves sheep. But, there are those times and that voice that says to the back of our minds, “What if I am not a sheep?”

We even see this response from the sheep in the Gospel reading. After the Son of Man explains all the good works that they did to inherit eternal life—the good works that were credited to them, because they were clothed with Him and His righteousness—they begin to question the Son of Man as to when exactly they did these good works. In their minds they did not do them. They failed at doing them. Such it is with us. When we fail in doing good works; when we hurt our neighbor; when we do wrong to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we feel the weight of our conscience calling us to repentance; calling us to humility. This is actually a good thing. For, it shows the work of the Holy Ghost upon our hearts, that He is driving us to repentance and faith in our Lord + Jesus. He is using the hammer of the Law to crush our sin-filled hearts, so that we might repent of our sins and ask God’s forgiveness.

The Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus Christ—sees our humility. He sees us when we fail in keeping His commandments getting down on our knees and confessing our sins and forgives them for His sake—for the sake of His atonement on the tree of the holy cross.

The Blessed Dr. Martin Luther in one of his sermons on this text points out that all of the sins listed in this Gospel have to deal with the Fifth commandment. For this is where we fail the most, in our care and concern for our fellowman. We do not often show love and concern for our neighbor. Part of it is the way that we are taught by our society. We need to get what is ours first. We need to be right over and above our neighbors. At times we can be so self-serving, it hurts our neighbors deeply.

The goats in our Gospel reading were the ones who did not really care about their neighbors. The charge is even leveled against them by the Son of Man, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” But, they thought they did. They lacked one thing: faith. They did not place their trust in the Son of Man. They were not clothed with His righteousness. They relied upon their own keeping of the Law. They were good in their own eyes. But, it was not enough to save them from being cast into everlasting punishment. The goats embody the pride and self-righteousness of our world, and our society. They think they are good people when they really are not. For, nobody is righteous who is not clothed in the righteousness of Christ through faith.

This righteousness that we possess through our Holy Baptism; this righteousness of Christ teaches us to be humble. It does this because it daily teaches that we are poor, miserable sinners in need of God’s grace and mercy. When we are daily reminded of how gracious and merciful our Lord is to us, we in turn show grace and mercy to all our fellow mankind. We desire to be gracious and merciful to everyone, no matter what wrongs they may have done to us, because we have sinned much against our Lord God, but He still grants us forgiveness.

When we daily realize what poor, miserable sinners we are, the little voice in the back of our heads serves as a daily warning that we are not worthy of the grace of God. Even the devil attacks our conscience, bringing up past sins; past ways in which we hurt our neighbor and did not show care and concern for him. In this way, we are daily attacked by our sinful flesh, and the devil from within. Then the world attacks us from without, by mocking us of our beliefs and on account of our Lord God. When we are unrelentingly attacked this way, it is easy for us to see why the sheep in the parable do not recognize their good deeds, for they see only their sin, and their failing to keep the Law.

This is why our Lord + Jesus has good words for us today. Words that dispel our fear, and drive us to cling to Him in faith even more. For He declares to us that we are “Blessed” of the heavenly Father. There is a Kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven—awaiting us. It has been prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. That is, our Lord God planned for us to be in Heaven with Him for all eternity, even before He began to make the heavens and the earth. That is how much He loves you. He planned for your salvation from before the world was made.

Not only did He make the plan, but He carried it through in the Person of the Son of Man—the Lord + Jesus Christ. It is important for us to remember the context of the giving of this parable. This discourse of our Lord is being given during Holy Week, just a couple of days before His crucifixion. When our Lord + Jesus talks about “sitting on the throne of His glory” one cannot but help to think of the cross. For, it is on the cross where the glory of the Lord’s plan of salvation is revealed. In His ultimate humiliation; in His suffering and death on our behalf; in His atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, our Lord reveals His true glory: that He has power to conquer sin, death and the devil, in order that He might bring His sheep into His eternal sheepfold.

Therefore, we need not fear the Last Day. For the Judgment has already occurred on the cross. We have been baptized into the death and resurrection of our Lord + Jesus Christ through our Holy Baptism. So then, we can cling to our Lord in faith when the devil and our conscience wars against us, and when the world is hurling its mocking insults. We can point them to our Lord Christ, Who has purchased and rescued us from their assaults. We can point to our Lord + Jesus and His keeping of the Law. For, we can say, “Yes, I have failed miserably in keeping the Law, I have not loved my neighbor

as myself, I am self-serving, I have hurt my neighbor, but, I am also clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and it is His works which are credited to me and which I bear, take it up with my Savior.”

It is out of this humble faith, then, that we can do the works that help our neighbor, and show love for our Lord God. For, our good works flow from Him. When we put on Christ and His righteousness in humility and faith, we naturally do the works that He would have us do, for He does them through us. Indeed, He has already fulfilled them during His earthly life. So that He might call you into His eternal Kingdom, which He prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.

Therefore, do not fear the Last Day. You are baptized. You are forgiven. You are sustained with the Lord’s Body and Blood in bread and wine throughout your life, and He keeps preaching into your ears the good work which He did in order to save you from sin, death and the devil through the voice of His ordained minister in your midst. And on the Last Day, when He comes in His glory, and all His angels are surrounding Him, and He sits on the throne of His glory, He will say to you, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” 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.