

Rorate coeli
St. John 1:19-28
December 24th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Who Are You?

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 Forerunner, St. John the Baptist, has come to prepare your hearts to receive your Lord + Jesus Christ. The Forerunner's calling is always to point you and all those who hear to our Lord + Jesus Christ. This is why in art St. John the Baptist is depicted with his hand and finger extended pointing all who see to the Lord, even as he is on the cover of the bulletin. He points to the Lord Christ, because he is not the Christ. He is not even worthy to loosen the sandal strap of the Lord. He is not worthy to untie his shoe. But, St. John the Baptist is the Forerunner who points us to the Lord + Jesus Christ, and therefore, his message and preaching is an important one.

The Forerunner prepares our hearts to receive our Lord by preaching into our ears, the good things that He will do. St. John the Baptist only baptizes with water. He only baptizes as a symbol, it is not the real baptism, it is only a foreshadowing of real and true baptism done with water and the Holy Ghost. The real baptism is not just a symbol. It actually kills and makes alive. It actually drowns and brings to life. It destroys the Old Adam, and brings forth a New Adam. It clothes you with the righteousness of Christ; with His works and His merits. And it creates in you faith in our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

Our Lord's work is more important than St. John's the Baptist, because He bring light and life to all who hear. The Lord brings salvation. St. John the Baptist only points us to the Christ. But, this is why his work is important, too, because in order for you to hear about the Christ, someone must point you to the Christ. The Forerunner was the first prophet to point men to the Lord + Jesus; the first one to preach that the long-foretold Messiah had come. He was the first, but he was not the last. The Apostles pointed men to the Christ. The ones who heard the Apostles, their disciples, pointed men to the Christ. This continues today wherever faithful ministers of the Word point their hearers to the works of Christ.

The works of Christ are that He left His throne of glory on the right hand of the Father and was born into our flesh, fulfilled the whole Law and will of God, and suffered our punishment on the tree of the holy cross, so that He might bring light and life to all who cling to Him in faith. This has been the message that preachers have preached down through the ages; the message that points men to our Lord and His works of salvation for us. This all began with St. John the Baptist. He was the first to preach "comfort" to the people of Israel.

Usually we have a little more time to reflect upon the preaching of St. John the Baptist; reflect upon the coming of our Lord. We usually have four weeks, this year we only have three, at least according to the liturgical calendar. For, the One for Whom St. John the Baptist prepares come to us tonight in the form of a baby. God will be born into our flesh. He will come to dwell with us. He will rescue us from our sin. And this was part of the preaching of St. John the Baptist—to point out people’s sins.

We cannot hear the Gospel—not truly—until we know our sin. If we do not know our lost condition, then we cannot truly be saved. If sin is just some bad thing you do, and not the corruption of your soul caused by the inheritance of the sin of your first parents, Adam and Eve, then you cannot truly know the Gospel. For if you think of sin as something you can get rid of, as if you could get rid of it by not doing all the little sins we do on a daily basis—using foul language, cursing at the other drivers on the road, being lazy and slothful, grumbling about and quarreling with your fellowman, not faithfully training your children and wife to the glory of God, or setting a bad example as a Christian, and all the other sins that I do on a daily basis, then you believe that you can conquer it. This cannot be further from the truth. As if sin could be gotten rid of like shedding a few pounds with diet and exercise.

Sin corrupts your soul. We have been conceived and are born in sin. We inherited this from our first parents, Adam and Eve. We cannot get rid of it by living a “good” life. Sin is like a cancer. You cannot diet and exercise cancer away. We cannot “good life” sin away. When we know this, then we know how truly lost we are, for we then know that we cannot rescue or save ourselves. We cannot get rid of the cancer of sin without a Physician. We need Someone to remove our sin; to remove the penalty of our sin. We need Someone to wash away our sin; to drown and kill our sin, so that it can no longer harm us. That Someone is the Lord + Jesus Christ. He is the One Who came down from Heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, was born of the Virgin Mary, Who suffered and died at the hands of Pontius Pilate, all so that our sins might be atoned for, and we might be rescued from sin, death and the power of the devil, and inherit eternal life.

This is He Whom St. John the Baptist points us to today. He is the One Who will come to us tonight in the form of a tiny baby. God, the ruler and maker of Heaven and Earth, dwelling with us as a tiny baby, so that He might redeem us from our sin. This is He Whose sandal straps we are not worthy to loose. He is the One Who comes to us and gives us the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which saves us from sin and imparts the Holy Ghost.

The Forerunner, St. John the Baptist, prepares us to receive our Lord + Jesus Christ. He points us to the Messiah—our Savior. He came preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He preaches “comfort” to all who hear and listen, just as Isaiah foretold. Listen to the Forerunner! Hear the preaching of St. John the Baptist! See and behold, the Messiah to Whom he points—our Lord + Jesus Christ. Always listen to and hear the man who is pointing you to your Savior; to the one sent by the Lord God to convict you of your sin, and prepare your ears to receive the Gospel.

We were born in sin, but our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ came to dwell in our flesh to redeem us from our sin, and give to us everlasting life. Let the heavens, therefore, rain down righteousness; the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus Christ, so that we might be clothed with His righteousness, and be adopted as co-heirs of His inheritance. And, let the Earth open up her womb and bring forth salvation. Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary bore from her womb the Savior of the whole world.

Prepare to receive Him tonight. Prepare by confessing your sins. Prepare by opening up your ears to hear about what He did and keeps on doing for you. He is coming to take the flesh of mankind upon Himself, so that as a man, He might redeem all mankind from their sins. He comes to redeem you from your sins. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice. For you have been redeemed from all your sins by the Lord + Jesus Christ. 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.