

The Festival of Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles and Martyrs
St. John 15:17-21
October 28th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Augusta Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

A Servant Is Not Above His Master

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.

Today we celebrate the lives of two Apostles and martyrs—Sts. Simon and Jude. And, the Gospel that the Church in her wisdom has appointed for this occasion is from the Evangelist St. John, where the Evangelist records for us the words of our Lord on the night before His suffering and death on our behalf. This Gospel puts into our ears the last command of our Lord; indeed, it is a new command; a command from our Lord Himself to His beloved Apostles Sts. Simon and Jude, and to His other Apostles (and even to us) before His sufferings would begin. In this Gospel our Lord tells us what His followers were to endure because they follow the One True Lord and Savior of the world—they would be hated and persecuted, just as He was hated and persecuted.

Our Lord prepares His Apostles for His suffering and death, by telling them what they would endure from the world—hate. Sts. Simon and Jude endured this hate with the rest of the Apostles. Not much is known about these two Apostles, however, it is believed that they were both missionaries to Persia, and according to legend in the western Church they were both martyred on the same day. This is why these two Apostles are celebrated together on this day. And, their martyrdom is an example of what our Lord + Jesus Christ is telling His Apostles in this pericope of the world's hatred for Christ and His followers.

The world hates you. It hates you because it hates the Lord + Jesus and all for which He stands. Our Lord is the One and Only Savior of the world, but the world does not desire to be saved, nor to have Savior. The world is an enemy of our Lord. Therefore, it is your enemy, too. You may desire to love the world all that you want, but it will hate you regardless. Our love is not supposed to be directed at the world and all its vanities anyway, it is to be focused on the Christ. And when our love is centered on Christ and His Father's will for us, the world will mock and ridicule us.

The world loves to talk about love. In fact, the world shows its hate for the Church and her children by distorting these very words of Christ, which tell us to love one another. The world says, "The Bible says, '*love one another*,' therefore, it is wrong to hate anyone." From this they derive that impenitent sinners should be loved in a way that allows them to go on being impenitent sinners. A couple of things in this regard: first, to allow someone to remain in their sin is not showing love, it is

showing hate, therefore the world's premise that it is unloving to call sinners to repentance is a false, misleading lie.

We see this in our very own midst these days, as society lashes out at the Church—at us—by calling us unloving; we are persecuted by being called narrow-minded, hateful, bigots who do not practice the love that we preach. However, in demanding that sinners be called to repentance, we are indeed showing love to our fellowman, for we are attempting to lead them out of the depths of Hell. And, allowing sinful behavior to go unchecked is showing hatred for those who cling to their sin like a life raft, for it will further establish and confirm impenitent people in their sin.

What is worse is that there are those who claim to be a part of the Church who are supporting and promoting certain kinds of sinful behavior, because they have adopted a worldly definition of love. Some of these false and pernicious preachers and teachers even bear the name of Lutheran, which makes our task all the more perilous as those who desire to hold fast to Lutheran doctrine.

This brings us to the second point in response to the world's view of love. How our Lord + Jesus Christ and the world define love are two different things. Love defined by our Lord is love that obeys the commands of His Father. This is what our Lord says in the text: the world hates the Church, and corrupts the Church's teaching on love because as our Lord says, *"they do not know Him who sent Me."* Love involves knowledge of the heavenly Father. Knowledge of the heavenly Father teaches us to obey His commandments, to fear His wrath and know that if we act contrary to His commandments He will punish us to the third and fourth generation. But our Lord's love is directed at those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Love of God apart from obedience to His commands is not love. This is what St. James talks about in his Epistle that love produces the fruit of love, that is, faith, and faith produces works, that is, obedience to our heavenly Father's commandments. A person cannot say that they have love, if they do not do the works of the heavenly Father. To say that more sternly, one cannot call themselves a Christian, or claim to be loved by God, or even to have love, if they do not obey His commands. There is no excuse for the impenitent sinner. If you desire to remain in your sin, you are not a part of the Christian Church.

There is a difference between the person who desires to do God's will, but fails miserably, and in spite of this failure, still desires to amend his sinful ways and live a holy life, and between a person who believes that he can still live a sinful life, doing whatever he believes is good in his own heart and whatever he feels good for him without repentance. A penitent person is sorry for his sins, and desires to do better, seeking forgiveness from his heavenly Father for his sins when he fails. An impenitent person shows no desire to amend his sinful life, and does not believe he even needs forgiveness, because, as we hear the accusation against us all the time, "we are all sinners, and God forgives sinners." No! God forgives penitent and contrite sinners on account of their faith and love for Him. He does not forgive willful and impenitent sinners, because they do not have faith. If they did have faith, they would desire to obey the commandments of the Lord. We may all be sinners, but we are not all the same kind of sinners.

From this we see how the world persecutes us—the Church—even today. And do not think for a second that you are not persecuted in this life. Sure, you may not end up being sawn in half like St. Simon or crucified like St. Jude, but we suffer persecution in this life by the spread of false and pernicious doctrine, and by those in the Church, either through apathy or fear or stupidity, who allow false and pernicious doctrine to go unchecked by the pure and holy teachings of our Lord. Therefore, we will suffer persecution at the hands of this evil world when we speak out against the false teachings on love in our society. We will suffer persecutions if we boldly stand and proclaim the truth of God's

Word. Our persecution may not come in the form of physical harm, but we will certainly face internal and emotional persecution as the world attacks our faith and trust in the Lord.

This is why on the night before His suffering and death our Lord + Jesus Christ offers these words of comfort to His Apostles, *“These things I command you, that you love one another.”* Our Lord was teaching His Apostles that the thing that will preserve them in the one, true faith amidst the world’s hatred and persecution, was their love for one another—the love that flowed out their love for Christ. They knew the Lord, and therefore, they knew the heavenly Father. Their love for one another was expressed through their obedience to God’s commands. When they remained faithful to the Word of God, they showed their love for their fellow Apostles. We show our love toward one another by remaining steadfast and faithful to God’s Word and will, too.

We do not show love if we chase after the desires of our own heart, or observe the ways of the world. But we do show our love for one another in keeping God’s commands, by calling sinners to repentance, by standing firm in the one, true faith amidst persecution and hatred. For, we are not greater than our Master. The Lord was hated by the world. He was hated by the world so much that they killed Him. But in this death, our Lord shows His great love for us, and for His Father, and gave us an example of love. For, on account of His love for His Father, He obeyed His Father’s will and offered up His own life as a sacrifice for us, so that all who believe on His Name are saved and become children of God the Father.

We receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation by our Lord’s act of love—His death in our stead. He won the battle over sin, death and the world, by love and obedience to the heavenly Father’s commandments. Therefore, our Lord showed His love for His Father by conforming His will to the will of the Father and sacrificing Himself for us. We show our love for our Lord and our heavenly Father, by conforming our will to His will, and obeying His commandments; by submitting ourselves to the authority of our Master, as humble and obedient servants. And, we show our love for one another by remaining faithful and steadfast to the Lord’s commandments, and remaining steadfast to the pure teaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments.

Therefore, we rejoice that we suffer hatred and persecution in this life, for it is a mark of our faithfulness; it is a mark of our Lord’s love for us; and it is a mark that we are members of the one, true Christian Church, for just as the world hated our Lord, the world hates us, and whenever we suffer persecution for faithfulness to His commands and will, we are being reminded of our Lord’s suffering and death on the holy Cross, and that even though the world hates us, our Lord still loves us. 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!