

The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. John 4:46b-54
October 21st, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Man Believed the Word

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.

How little we understand the mercy that our Lord God daily extends to us! We truly do not comprehend His mercy!

Our Lord God does not treat us as we treat each other. We tend to lash out at those who upset us. We are prone to ignore those who do not please us. We want to get back at those who offend us. We are inclined to ridicule and mistreat those of whom we think little. Too often we hold in our memories the sins others have done against us. We are likely to take offense at the slightest comment, no matter how innocently spoken. We are apt to turn a deaf ear to those who ask silly questions, or ask of us the impossible. And too often we are unwilling to let bygones be bygones, to bear with the weakness of another, and to be quick to forgive and even quicker to make the first move toward reconciliation.

Worse than all this, we deal with our Lord God the same way. We beg Him to pardon our sins, but in the same breath we are prone to demand that He live up to our expectations. We ask Him to “deliver us from every evil”, yet too often we grouse and complain when He does not act quickly enough to suit us. We pray that He be patient with us, yet we are inclined to be impatient with Him. We beseech Him to calm us and grant us His peace, yet we are apt to blame Him for our self-made troubles, and get angry at Him for the messes we have made. And so, we try to find comfort and peace in our own way. We ignore the strengthening He gives in His Supper, and His other means of grace. And we resist and fight against His forgiveness, love, kindness, and mercy through our daily sinful actions.

Yet even when we are faithless, our Lord God remains faithful. Even when we turn our backs on Him, He does not turn His back against us. Even when we thumb our nose at Him by continuing in willful sinfulness, He still comes back time and again and says, “You cannot make Me hate you. I love you in spite of your sin. My love brought you into this world, and I am determined to love you to the end of your life and into My eternal kingdom. I will not force Myself upon you, but neither will you force Me away from you. And no matter how much you think you can arrogantly wish me out of your world, I will never leave you alone. For I will never leave you nor forsake you. And My mercy endures forever.”

Such is His relentless love for you and all of mankind! Such is His determined kindness towards you! Such is His persistent, single-minded mercy for you! His mercy may become for us a consuming fire, but only because we refused to let it be a cleansing and purifying flame. For, no matter what, our

Lord God will not turn on us, and He will not be provoked into hating us. He will not give up on us. And He will always stretch out His hand—no matter how often we slap it away, or even try to cut it off! That is the extent our Lord's mercy.

Deep down, because the Holy Ghost brought you into Christ's holy Body; because the Spirit of Truth sealed you in the one, true faith when you were baptized; because the Spirit of God persistently and consistently delivers the mercy of the Lord God into your own flesh—deep down, you are not surprised when you hear how determined our Lord is in His mercy. And just as true, deep down you are not surprised at the way our Lord + Jesus reacts to the man who begged our Lord to come down and heal his son. But do you see the depth of our Lord's mercy even for this man? For we so often take the Lord and His mercy for granted. In fact, we demand Him to be merciful—acting as if we are entitled, as if His mercy is our right, as if He owes us at least that much.

No matter how we treat our Lord, no matter how little we comprehend His mercy, He always responds the same—with more and greater and superabundant mercy.

And so, when the man approaches Him, our Lord does not do what we would do. He does not wave him off. And He does not say, "All you people want is signs and wonders. When will you wake up and see what I am really all about? When will you get beyond your petty concerns, your pathetic desire to be entertained, and start believing what I say?"

No, that is not how our Savior speaks to us, or to any of His own. Instead, He gently and lovingly urges us to look beyond His miracles, His signs and wonders, so that we might embrace the mercy that causes the miracle. He gently and lovingly invites us to hold to our breast not what He can do for us, but Who He is—the Savior of mankind, especially them that believe.

And so, He does not say to the pleading nobleman, "Go away." Instead, our Lord + Jesus kindly tells him, "*Go your way. Your son lives.*"

Do you see the mercy of the Lord + Jesus? The man is not a perfect believer, because he thinks that the Lord needs to be present to heal his son, but our blessed Lord shows him that He has the power to heal with just His Word. Do you see the mercy of our Lord + Jesus? The man desires our Lord's presence to heal his Son, but through the Lord's Word the Holy Ghost stirs up in him the faith to believe the Word of the Lord, and gives him the confidence to walk away trusting that what our Lord + Jesus says is good and true and right. For the Evangelist St. Luke proclaims, "*The man believed the word.*"

Now we hear this story, not for our Lord + Jesus' sake and not to remember fondly this man's conversion. We hear this story every year so that we might know and believe and take to heart the depth and width and breadth and height of our Lord's mercy; so that we might better understand how merciful our Blessed Lord is toward us.

And just how merciful is our Lord? So much so, that He can heal our souls and strengthen our bodies, and refresh our spirits using nothing more than His Word. And when He speaks, He brings us back to life, for that is the purpose of all that He says to this man. For the Lord + Jesus does not rebuke the man for his dullness of faith, but rather breathes into life a true and living faith inside this man. And the Lord + Jesus does not dismiss him, but rather says, "*Your son lives*" so that true faith might come alive and grow both in him, and in his whole household. And, so that we might have a picture of how the Word of God work in us.

And that is precisely what our Lord, in His mercy, does for us. When we are sure that He is ignoring us or crushing us, through His Word He is actually working for our good. When we are sure

He has turned against us, He is actually fighting mightily for us, because He continues to preach into our ears His holy Word. When we are sure He is only doing the least, He is actually doing His utmost for wherever His Word is preached there He is calling us to believe His promises for us.

Our Lord revives and heals and fortifies us simply by speaking His word. But here is where our Lord's mercy exceeds even our wildest imagination. Our Lord never simply speaks His Word. In His large and inexhaustible mercy, our Lord gives into us—into our mouths, into our own flesh and blood—the very life that He is; His own death-defying Body, and His own life-renewing Blood. So, He does not just speak a word; He enters the roof of our mouth by His own Body and Blood so that we might be saved. He even began this work through His drowning your Old Adam in the waters of Holy Baptism, when He claimed you as His own with the words, “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He sent out His Spirit to dwell within you, so that by His Word you might have faith, and be strengthened in that faith whenever you hear His promises.

See yourself, then, as the nobleman in today's Gospel—the doubting, barely believing man whom the Lord gently and lovingly brings to faith. Even more so, see yourself as the man's son—a person in a losing battle with death, and then here comes the Lord + Jesus in His Word and with His Spirit to chase away death, the devil, and Hell, and to bring you not just back from the brink, but into the fullness of the life that He is and so earnestly desires to live in you and through you. For take note that the son of this nobleman was healed at the seventh hour; seven being the number of completion. At the seventh hour, the son of the nobleman was healed fully and completely. You too have been fully and completely healed of the deadly disease of sin, which had corrupted your soul unto death, and through the waters of your Holy Baptism, which placed you into the Lord's crucifixion and death He brought you out of death into life, just as He rose from the grave. And having been fully and completely healed of the deadly disease of sin, you are now eternally alive in our Lord + Jesus Christ, and will be saved on the Last Day.

To this Lord + Jesus Christ; to His Father Who determined to send His mercy in the flesh; and to the Holy Ghost, Who not only delivers God's mercy into you, but also binds us together in His holy Body, the Church—to this Blessed Holy Trinity Whose mercy surpasses our understanding—belongs all glory, honor and worship now and forever. 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!