

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 18:9-14
August 12th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

God, Be Merciful to Me a Sinner!

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 theme of today's Gospel is easy to discern: do not be like the Pharisee. Do not praise yourself for all the good things that you do. Your good is not measured by how you compare to other people in the world. Your good is measured by the Law—the Ten Commandments, which you break daily and often. The tax collector recognized this. He measured his good according to the Ten Commandments and found himself extremely lacking. This is what our meditation on the Ten Commandments should produce in us; an understanding that we are indeed poor, miserable sinners in need of God's grace. When we meditate on the Ten Commandments, we should not end up like the Pharisee, who only saw how well he obeyed the Law, and how good he was in relation to other people.

This, unfortunately, is the way of the world. We praise men for their good deeds. According to the world the best people are the ones who are kind to everyone, and give huge donations to needy people. And, these are good things. We should also live our lives helping our neighbors and the people in need.

But, these philanthropists lack one vital thing that renders all their good works void. They lack faith in the One, True Triune God. These men put their faith in their good deeds. In essence, they have put their faith in their faith in themselves. They try to measure up themselves according to what they do, and how little other people do what they do. We should never rely on our good works as a means of salvation. This is just another form of making the keeping of the Law the means by which we are saved.

The Law has been fulfilled by the Lord + Jesus Christ. The requirements of the Law have been fulfilled. Trusting in our good works, thoughts and words, does nothing for us. The Israelites of old could not keep the Law of God. Our Christian ancestors could not keep the Law. We cannot keep the Law. Therefore, we should never trust in the Law, or our keeping of it. Measuring ourselves according to other people is just another way of making the Law the thing in which we trust.

However, when we model ourselves after the tax collector in the Gospel; when we beat our breasts in shame over how much we have broken the Ten Commandments. When we confess before God that we are indeed poor, miserable sinners in need of God's grace (as we did at the beginning of service, and as we should do every day, both morning and evening), then we are placing our trust and

faith, and belief in the right thing—in our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who fulfilled the Law perfectly on our behalf.

This faith in the Christ and His keeping of the Law, brings us to the place where grace was won for us—to the tree of the holy cross. The Lord + Jesus endured beatings and death; He endured the punishment that we deserve. So that, when we beat our breasts in shame at our sin (as did the tax collector in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke), we are reminding ourselves that our sins were paid for with the beatings that our Lord endured for us out of His great love for us.

The tax collector was a sinner. In fact, the title tax collector became synonymous with the definition of sinner. They were corrupt, because they were in charge of money. That is what the possession of money can do, it corrupts. It corrupts mankind, because we need money to support us in every aspect of our physical lives. We need money to pay our rent or mortgage. We need money for food. We need money to buy a car, and keep up on its maintenance, and put gas in it. We need money to get supplies for school, and if we go to college, well, that costs money, too. We need money to furnish our house, and do fun things in this life, so that our lives are not boring and troublesome. We need money for everything. And because this is so, we tend to trust in our money.

The more we have, the more we think are lives will be better. This is the way it was with tax collectors. Because they had large amounts of money, the more they wanted and needed. And, that is the hidden lie that people deny, that the more money we have and the more stuff we have, the more money and stuff we need. We never have enough money. This is why the pursuit and trust in money is one of the worst false idols we could have, because our false god, never supplies us with what we truly need.

On account of this, the tax collector from the Gospel, realized the folly of trusting in his money, and begged the Lord God to have mercy on him. This is the way it should be with us, when we realize the false gods that we keep. We should forsake those false gods, especially the false god that the Pharisee set up for himself: his keeping of the Law; his good deeds; his being better than his fellowman. We need to forsake our false gods, and come before the Lord God in penitence and confess our sins to Him; confess that we have not loved Him with our whole heart, and that we have chased after other, false gods and trusted in them, and not in Him.

The Lord + Jesus has even given us a wonderful means by which we can confess those sins to Him. Through Private Confession and Absolution, we confess our sins to God, and the pastor, speaking with the authority and voice of God, absolves, or forgives, our sins. This is such a valuable tool, that we should not think that our sins are too great, or not great enough to receive personal absolution from God Himself for all the sins that we commit. Regular private confession, both teaches us to look at our lives in terms of the Ten Commandments, and realize we break them often and daily.

But, it also teaches us faith in Christ, for the absolution which we seek when we come to private confession, forces us to lay our sins at our Lord's cross and receive from Him the grace and mercy that we so desperately need. And those sins which we confess to the pastor as to God Himself, are never revealed. The pastor is bound by his ordination oath, to never divulge the sins confessed to him. The sin confessed only goes into the ear of God, and He is the One Who forgives us our sin, through the mouth of the pastor. Therefore, we should be begging the pastor to hear our confession, just as much as the tax collector in our Gospel reading begged the Lord God for mercy.

My dear friends, let us then deny our false gods, stop looking at our good works, and look at our inability to keep the Law of God. Then let us come before the Lord God, beating our breasts and begging Him for mercy. Let us do this daily, both morning and evening, saying with our lips, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And then, let us trust the promises of our Lord + Jesus, Who promises that in His

death, all our sins have been paid for, and we now have inherited eternal life with Him in Heaven, salvation from sin, death and the power of the devil, and above all we have inherited freedom and forgiveness from the pain and penalty of all our sins.

Let us give thanks daily to our Lord for all His good gifts for us. For, out of His great love for us, He sacrificed Himself, so that we might be united to Him for all eternity, and go to live with Him and all the saints for all eternity. Thanks be to God, Who is merciful to us poor, miserable sinners. 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!