

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 5:20-26
July 8th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Your Righteousness

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.

Our Lord + Jesus Christ tells us that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Our first reaction when we hear that should be fear. For, the scribes and the Pharisees were the gold standard of righteousness. They dedicated their entire life to the law and the keeping of the law. They followed every rule. They even made up some rules, so that they would not break other rules. When the Israelites pictured a righteous person performing righteous acts they thought of the scribes and Pharisees.

So, when our Lord + Jesus Christ tells the crowds on mount during His sermon that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they could not help but be afraid. So too should we. For, no one's righteousness lived up to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It just did not happen.

You may also notice in the bulletin that the title of this sermon is: "Your righteousness." Some people may look at that and think this is going to be a sermon on how to improve your righteousness; how to have a righteousness like that of the scribes and Pharisees. There are people that think that Christianity is all about their righteousness. The scribes and the Pharisees certainly did. And it appears at first glance that the Lord + Jesus is using them as an example of how a person should live his life. There are certainly many preachers in this world that would make this application of the text.

However, to do so one must gloss over a very important word in the Lord's sermon: exceeds. "Unless your righteousness *exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven." What does this mean? It means that as righteous and holy a life the scribes and Pharisees lived, it still was not good enough. Even the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was not good enough to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for our Lord says that the righteous requirements of the Law needed to be even exceeded by the scribes and Pharisees.

Well, if their righteousness—if their holy living and observance of the law—was not enough, how could the other Israelites hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven? How can we hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven? We daily sin much. We even confessed it a few moments ago, that we are poor, miserable sinners. Our Old Adam wins often. We fail daily in drowning him. For the chief hymn we sang Martin Luther's catechetical hymn on the Ten Commandments. Hopefully you were like me as

we sang it, and thought to yourself, well I do not do a good job of keeping that commandment. Of course, that should be our reaction whenever we study the Ten Commandments. We should not be thinking about how great of a job we have done in keeping the Commandments. No, we should be reflecting on how poorly of a job we have done in keeping them. Especially when it comes to loving our neighbor as ourselves. We daily fail in loving and serving our neighbor.

This should lead us to contrition, that is, sorrow over our sins. We should daily come to the conclusion that our righteousness is just not good enough to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Well then, when we come to this point—when we realize that we are indeed poor, miserable sinners who cannot save themselves—what are we to do?

We turn to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. He is the only One Whose righteousness not only exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. But, His righteousness was perfect. He was without sin. He was innocent of all breaking of the Law. He fulfilled the Law for us. His perfect keeping of the Law was for our benefit. The Israelites who came to hear our Lord's sermon on the mount, did not keep the Law perfectly. They were not going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven on account of their righteousness. The scribes and Pharisees were not going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven on account of their righteousness. We are not going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven on account of our righteousness, either. For our righteousness is imperfect at best, and totally corrupted at worst.

We are not justified by our works and keeping of the Law. We are justified by faith. Faith clings to the Savior; to the Lord + Jesus Christ and His works and merits; to His righteousness. What is more sure and certain than our Lord's keeping of the Law? Nothing is more certain and sure. If we are to trust in our works, we will forever be in doubt. Are my works enough? No, they are not. But the Lord's works, His merits, His perfect keeping of the Law, His righteousness does not fail. It is sure and certain. And because it is sure and certain, when our Lord offers up Himself as a sacrifice to the Father in our place, we know that the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son on our behalf.

Then we also know that when we cling to our mediator and intercessor, Who pleads on our behalf to the heavenly Father, we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For our entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is not based on what we did or did not do, it is based upon the works of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

Therefore, when we doubt our salvation, when we doubt our righteousness, we turn to our Lord. We cling to Him in faith. We trust in Him and His works. We look to Him to cover over our unrighteousness. However, even faith is not something that we have drum up inside of ourselves. Our Lord + Jesus left us visible means to which we can point to and say the Lord has made us righteous through these means.

He has baptized us. He has washed away all that we have inherited from Adam and that we have added thereto and clothed us with His righteousness. This is why the Pastor wears a white robe—an Alb—as a reminder to all that see it that not only he is covered in the righteousness of Christ (Whose words he preaches), but all of us who are baptized also wear this white spiritual robe of our Lord's righteousness. This is why when we sin, we soil that white robe. It must be washed in the remembrance of our Holy Baptism. The Old Adam must be drowned. The New Adam must arise and put on the white robe of our Lord's righteousness. We can cling in faith to this work of our Lord that has made us righteous. For, in our Holy Baptism our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees, for we are clothed with the righteousness of the One Who fulfilled the Law perfectly.

Having been baptized, and having been instructed in the teachings of the Church, we can then receive the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus Christ through the eating and drinking of His Body and

Blood in bread and wine. The white robes that we received at our Holy Baptism have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb—our Lord + Jesus Christ. This meal is a remembrance that we have been covered with the Blood of the Lamb, just like the door posts and lintel were washed with the blood of the Passover lamb. So that the wrath of God over our unrighteousness might pass over us and be quenched by His Only-Begotten Son's suffering and death upon the tree of the holy cross. When we receive this bread and drink this wine, we are to remember the sacrifice that our Lord made for us, but even more so, remember that He did it for us, so that we might have life and forgiveness. He died for us so that we might be called righteous in the sight of all those in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Your righteousness is lacking if you trust only in your works and keeping of the Law. But, your righteousness is complete when you cling in faith to the One Who suffered and died for your salvation. His righteousness exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, and He credits that righteousness to you, so that you too are considered righteous and perfectly innocent and can therefore enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. When we gather in this place of worship—on this mount—we are given a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. We enjoy a moment of bliss with Lord and Savior. But, when He calls us home, we will enjoy the eternal bliss of living under our Lord's righteousness, Whose righteousness is now your righteousness. 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!