

Midweek Lenten Vespers 1
St. Luke 22:24-32
March 13th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Not So Among 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.

On Sunday we observed our Lord + Jesus Christ being tempted by the devil. The devil tempted Him with the greatness of the world if He would bow down and worship the devil. Our Lord defeated the devil with the Word of God that declares that you should only worship the Lord God and Him only shall you serve. Our Lord soundly defeats the devil and his lies. There is no greatness apart from the greatness gifted to us by the Lord God; there is no greatness apart from faith. Faith teaches us to be humble; to not have pride; to not think we are the greatest. Faith teaches us to see our sin and seek out our redemption from sin outside of ourselves and in our One and Only Savior, our Lord + Jesus Christ.

From Sunday we come to today's Gospel reading where the Apostles are arguing among themselves which of them is the greatest. Our Lord + Jesus Who is the greatest man to ever live, because He is both God and man, humbled Himself to endure the devil's temptations, and defeats him. It is not so with the Apostles. The Apostles contend with one another about who should be considered the greatest.

It should be remembered that these events take place on the night of our Lord's betrayal and arrest. So, it makes sense that this dispute arose over who should be the one to do the work of a servant and wash the feet of the other disciples. We learn from the Gospel of St. John that our Lord + Jesus takes it upon Himself to wash the feet of the disciples. He serves them. Our Lord + Jesus not only provides an example, but reveals His true nature and character. He is the One Who comes to serve us, His creation, with His life on our behalf.

He serves us by bearing our sin and our punishment. He serves us by fulfilling the Law perfectly for us. He serves us by interceding to the heavenly Father for us and for all mankind. Satan asked to sift Simon Peter like wheat. The devil sought to sift all of the Apostles like wheat. He seeks to sift us like wheat, even as he sifts many in this world and our society with their own self-importance and the lustful desires of their sinful hearts.

The devil was able to sift Judas Iscariot like wheat, and he betrayed our Lord + Jesus for thirty pieces of silver by his own greed and lust. The devil indeed sifts like wheat many in this world, who chase after the sinful desires of their own hearts. The devil also seeks to lead us daily into temptation

and sin, so that we might fall away from the faith. Even as he sought to sift Simon Peter as wheat so that his faith might fail. The word translated as “fail” here in the Greek language literally means “to be eclipsed.” Just like the sun is darkened when the moon eclipses it, so too is our faith darkened and covered when it fails. In other words, any light of faith that may have existed is covered up and gone. No faith can shine through any longer. This is what the devil desired to do to Simon Peter. It is what he did to Judas Iscariot. And, it is what he longs to do to us, whenever we are led into sin, shame, guilt and despair. It is what he is able to do to us when we are led into pride, haughtiness, and self-importance.

The Apostles were led into pride about how great they thought they were; about how more righteous and deserving of God’s love they were over against their own Christian brothers. It should not have been so among them. And, it should not be so among you.

Simon Peter would deny our Lord three times before the cock crowed. Where was his pride and greatness then? It failed. He went out and wept bitterly, for his faith failed. But his experience would later serve as an example to all the Apostles. He who had bragged about following the Lord + Jesus to prison and death, denied Him three times. He failed just like all the other disciples who left our Lord + Jesus and fled when He was arrested. Simon Peter failed in the same way that we fail every day of our lives to live without sin and follow our Lord’s commandments.

We certainly commit many sins and do many sinful acts. We think evil thoughts and say evil things. And then there are all the good things that we fail to do for our fellowman. These certainly are sins worthy of our repentance—worthy of our contrition and faith in our Lord + Jesus, our Savior. However, it is just as dangerous for our souls when we fall victim to the sin of pride, and the Apostles in the Gospel reading do. We can easily puff ourselves up and think we are not that sinful. Especially when we start comparing ourselves to other people. We are especially prone to this when we look at the evil world and think about how we are not like them. It would be better for us to continue to look at our own hearts, and not think too highly of ourselves.

Our Lord + Jesus reminds the Apostles that if one wants to be great, he must be a servant. We are not of this world. Our citizenship is in Heaven. Therefore, we should not act like the world, or the people in our world who only seek their own glory.

Our glory is found in the Kingdom promised to us. Our glory is in Heaven. Our Lord + Jesus tells the Apostles that they are promised a Kingdom, where they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But the point of this promise is not about their ruling, it is about the gift of Heaven; that they get to dwell with the Lord + Jesus for all eternity. This promise is not just for the Apostles, either. We too, on account of our faith—on account of our enduring the persecutions and trials that even our Lord + Jesus endured—we too will inherit the crown of eternal life. There in Heaven we will sit down with our Lord + Jesus and eat and drink with Him at the wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom.

We have a foretaste of this eating and drinking with our Lord every time we gather at this holy altar and receive His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. This meal which we eat and drink is a foretaste of what is awaiting us in Heaven.

Until then, just as our Lord + Jesus prayed for Simon Peter to be spared from the devil; even as He prayed the same for all of His Apostles, even Judas, who rebelled of His own free will, our Lord + Jesus intercedes for us to the heavenly Father. He prays that we might not be sifted as wheat by the devil. He prays that our faith may not completely fail. He prays for us that might endure the persecutions and trials of this life, so that when we have returned to Him in repentance, we might strengthen our fellow Christians. Even as St. Peter was able to strengthen the other Apostles when in repentance, He was able to return in faith to the Lord + Jesus.

Let us therefore turn to the Lord + Jesus and seek His help diligently and daily that He might rescue us from temptation and sin. And when we fail, and we will fail, let us pray continuously that the Lord + Jesus might continue to establish our faith through the work of the Holy Ghost through His Word and His Sacraments. And let us also continue to strengthen one another in our faith when we fail, bearing with one another's burdens of sin, and comforting one another with the promises of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. For He has fulfilled the Law perfectly for you, since you were unable to keep it. And He even suffered your punishment on the tree of the cross, so that you might have an eternal home in Heaven.

Let us give thanks daily for the great gifts our Lord has bestowed upon us. For He serves us by interceding for us to the heavenly Father, and He holds back the power of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, whenever He preaches into our ears his holy Word. Let not pride deceive you. But rather, take pride in the gifts of the Lord God, Who desires to bring you into His eternal home in Heaven. 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!