

Judica
St. John 8:46-59
April 7th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Why Do You Not Believe Me?

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.

Everything hinges on the Word of God. The Word of God proclaims the truth. It leads us to faith in the promises proclaimed through the Word of God. The Word of God proclaims the Messiah. The Word of God proclaims the Lord + Jesus Christ to be the One and Only Savior of the world. The Word of God proclaims that our Lord + Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly for us; the Law which we are unable to keep even a little. The Word of God proclaims that our Lord + Jesus suffered the punishment that we deserve on the tree of the holy cross. We cling to these truths in faith.

The Jews in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John did believe the truth about the Lord + Jesus. It was out of jealousy and hatred that they refused to believe. If they looked at the works of the Lord + Jesus, they had no basis for their hatred and jealousy. So, the Lord asks them, *“Who of you convicts me of sin?”* He was not waiting for an answer, because they could not answer. There was nothing in His actions that they could point to as sin. But on account of their rebellion against Him as Messiah, the Jews begin to try to corrupt everything that the Lord + Jesus says.

This is why He goes on to say, *“If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?”* Again, He is not waiting for an answer. The Jews are not only against the Lord + Jesus, but in truth they are against the heavenly Father, for in their rejection of the Messiah—the man + Jesus from Nazareth—they also are rejecting the Father, for He is the One Who sent Him into the world to redeem the world from sin, death and the power of the devil. They are not of God, because they do not hear the Word of God. The Word of God is embodied in the man Christ + Jesus. He is the Word of God incarnate. If you do not believe Him, you do not believe God, for they are the same, and have the same Word. The heavenly Father and the Lord + Jesus preach and teach the same thing. They both proclaim that the Messiah, the Lord + Jesus, has come into the world to redeem mankind from their sins; to give them something sure and confident in which to believe.

The events of this Gospel reading take place in the week before our Lord’s suffering, crucifixion and death. The enmity between the Jews and our Lord + Jesus is ramping up as His time approaches. In seeing their obstinacy, the Lord no longer masks His words. He is more direct with them, in the hopes that being more direct they might turn from their hatred and jealousy in repentance. But, they cling even more to their obduracy and they accuse our Lord + Jesus of being *“a Samaritan and have a demon.”*

Our Lord + Jesus only addresses the insult about having a demon. Being a Samaritan is not a sin in the eyes of the Lord God. The Samaritans were those from the land of Galilee, the place where our Lord grew up and lived. He knew the Samaritans, and the ones who were accused of being Samaritans, and they were the ones who received His message the most joyfully. The Jews wanted to make being a Samaritan on par with having a demon. But where one lives, and what their ancestry was, does not make one fit or unfit for the Kingdom of God. What makes one fit for the Kingdom of God is belief in the Word of God, especially what the Word of God teaches us about the Lord + Jesus being the Christ.

In essence, the Jews accuse the Lord + Jesus of the sin of which they are guilty. Their unbelief in Him has caused them to be in league with the devil and his demons. They are outside the Kingdom of Heaven. They belong to the devil's kingdom. Such it is with all those who refuse to believe on the Lord + Jesus as the Christ and Savior, they are outside of the Kingdom of God. The Jews refuse the Lord + Jesus as the Christ. They refuse His Word and on account of this they are refusing the heavenly Father Who sent His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord + Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem the world.

The Lord + Jesus also came to bring light and life to the world. This is the great promise contained in this pericope. That everyone who clings to the Lord + Jesus in faith will receive an eternal reward—an eternal life in Heaven with the Lord God and with all the saints. All those who believe on the Lord + Jesus will never see or taste death.

Our Lord + Jesus is obviously referring to the eternal death, that awaits all those who refuse to believe the Word of God, and believe on the Lord + Jesus for their salvation. The Lord + Jesus is talking about spiritual death, which for the unbeliever is eternal death. But, the Jews take this to mean physical death. For this they mock the Lord. Even more so, they mock their father Abraham, and all the prophets. For what do they say about Abraham and the prophets? They proclaim that he is dead. They proclaim that the prophets are dead.

Not so, says the Word of God. The Triune Lord God is the God of the living. Just as He proclaimed about Himself to Moses from the burning bush, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are alive in Heaven. They are not dead. God is not a god of the dead. It is an insult to proclaim about Abraham and the prophets that they are dead. But this reveals the true nature of the hearts of the Jews. They not only do not believe the Word of the Lord + Jesus, but they do not even believe the Word of the heavenly Father. Not much has changed in two thousand years. The Jews still refuse to believe on the Lord + Jesus as the Messiah, and they have so corrupted the Word of God that their teachings on it, no longer reflect its truth. They have reduced the Word of God into a book of helpful sayings, instead of the way of truth that leads to life through the Messiah—the Lord + Jesus Christ.

Sadly, there are many so-called Christian church bodies which have done the same thing to the Word of God—made it into a self-help book, where if you look hard enough you will find help for whatever trouble you may be facing. All the while they ignore the greatest problem which we all face, that of our sinfulness and rebellion against God whenever we break the Ten Commandments. By doing this they have turned the Word of God into a book of laws; into a moral code that must be observed if one is to find any benefit in it.

Truly this is the work of the devil and his demons, who easily lead men into destruction when they turn them away from the salvation found in Christ + Jesus alone. The Jews did not listen to the Word of God, but made up their own traditions and laws contrary to the Word of God. So, when the Lord + Jesus came trying to turn them back to the Word of God and its truth, they refused to repent and listen to His teaching. They refused to listen to the teaching of the heavenly Father, which was taught by the Lord + Jesus. Everything hinges on the Word of God. And in their refusal to believe the Word of

God, they rejected all of the good things that the Lord God desired to do for them. In rejecting the Lord + Jesus, they had rejected the heavenly Father.

This should serve as a warning to us. That we should ever remain in the Word of God; reading it, studying it, marking and inwardly digesting it. For it is the means by which we are told about our salvation in the Lord + Jesus alone. We cling to this Word in faith, for it proclaims that the Law has been fulfilled by the Christ. It proclaims that our sins and transgression against the Law of God have been paid for in blood; the blood of our Lord + Jesus on the tree of the cross.

The Word of God proclaims into our ears that we have an eternal reward in Heaven. We will not taste death, but we will live with our Lord + Jesus and all the saints who have gone before us for all eternity in Heaven. For we have been judged righteous on account of the suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus on the tree of the cross, which sacrifice we cling to in faith. In His innocent suffering and death on the cross, the Lord + Jesus was vindicated of all of our sins. He was declared righteous, because He was without sin. His innocence pays for our rebellion and sin.

We are justified, that is, declared righteous, on account of our faith, which clings to this work of Christ on the cross. His Word proclaims that the works and merits of Christ have accomplished our salvation. We cling to this promise in faith, for everything hinges upon the Word of God. And the Word of God proclaims that we will never see or taste death on account of our Lord's death on the cross. We will live in Heaven for all eternity. This is the truth. You can believe it, for our Lord + Jesus has spoken it. 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!