

The Festival of the Ascension of our Lord
St. Mark 16:14-20
May 30th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas+

Preach the Gospel

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 Jesus Christ, Thou Almighty Son of God, Who art no longer in humiliation here on Earth, but sittest at the right hand of Thy Father, Lord over all things: We beseech Thee, send us Thy Holy Spirit; give Thy Church pious pastors, preserve Thy word, control and restrain the devil and all who would oppress us; mightily uphold Thy Kingdom, until all Thine enemies shall have been put under Thy feet, that we may hold the victory over sin, death, and the devil, through Thee, Who livest and reignest with God the Father and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord + Jesus Christ, through the Apostles, gave His Church a task. That task is to *“go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”* This is the task that has been given to us as the Church on Earth. Now, this task was given to the Church, but our task is to fulfill this in our own location. We are to preach the Word in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution in this place. We are to hear the Word and participate in the Blessed Sacraments here in this location. And we are to encourage others to join us here so that they may have the Gospel preached to them.

There is a promise in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark today. For he tells us at the very end of the book that the Lord + Jesus was with the Apostles as they went everywhere telling the good news of what He has done for them and for all mankind. The Lord was with them. He was there confirming the work that they did. This is also the promise to us that the Lord will be with us as we preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. For, what does He tell us? He says, that wherever two or three are gathered in my Name there I am in the midst of them.

The Lord + Jesus is here with us today. He is here today confirming the word and the Sacrament through the work of His Holy Ghost Who is working on our hard, sin-filled hearts to convict us of our many transgressions, but also to comfort us with the hope of the Gospel; that our Lord + Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly for us, and He suffered and died on the tree of the holy cross the punishment that we deserve. He pays our debt and we go free. Therefore, it is to our advantage that when we sin, we should turn to our Lord + Jesus in repentant faith. For there is no salvation in ourselves. We are too racked with sin and shame. But there is forgiveness in our Lord’s sacrifice and merits for us.

Since He is therefore with us today, as He promised He would be whenever two or three are gathered in His Name, let us humbly come before Him and confess our sins, and receive the Absolution, that is, the forgiveness of our sins, from His holy Throne of Grace. Let us come to this holy altar and receive the forgiveness that He won for us on the cross and bestows upon us through His Body and

Blood given in bread and wine. Let us daily remember our Holy Baptism; that even when the Old Adam defeats us and we fall into sin and temptation that through the work of the Holy Ghost in the living waters of our Holy Baptism, that the Old Adam will be defeated and drowned through contrition and faith in our Lord + Jesus. When we remember our Holy Baptism, and remember that our sins have been washed away in those life-giving waters, a new man arises and lives before the Lord God in righteousness and innocence.

We celebrate today the Festival of our Lord's Ascension. He has gone up into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again to judge the quick and the dead on the Last Day. But this is not a day that means our Lord + Jesus left us here on Earth to fend off the assaults of the devil all by our lonesome. His going into Heaven does not mean He left us. He is with us whenever two or three are gathered together in His Name. He continues to be with His Church. The Blessed Evangelist St. Mark even tells us this is the case for the Apostles and the Church *after* the Lord's Ascension to the right hand of the Father.

Not only has He not left us alone to deal with the attacks of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, but He even sent to us a Helper; a Comforter. He sent to us the Holy Ghost to guide us into the way of truth. The Apostles received the Holy Ghost ten days after the Ascension of our Lord on the Feast of Pentecost—fifty days after our Lord's resurrection from the dead. We, as the Church, will celebrate this great feast in ten days ourselves on Whitsunday.

Through the work of the Holy Ghost we are led into the truth. We are led into the truth that we are indeed, poor, miserable sinners in need of God's grace, for we daily sin much. We daily fail to keep the Commandments of our Lord. We desire to be righteous and live holy lives, but we fail miserably time and time again. Now, we could be left to our despair. We certainly deserve it. But our Helper, our Comforter, the Holy Ghost also speaks to the truth of the Gospel. He points us to the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ. He tells us through the Word of God preached in its purity and through our participation in the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution that our sins have been paid for, and that all the gifts that our Lord + Jesus won on account of His innocent suffering and death, have been given to us.

We receive the benefits of those gifts—forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation—through the task that the Church has been given by the Lord to do: to preach the Gospel; to come to this holy place and receive those gifts humbly from our Lord + Jesus as He administers them to us from His Throne of Grace through His called and ordained servant.

The Lord sent out the Apostles to do the task of the Church. The Apostles appointed others to follow after them. Today the stewards of the mysteries of our Lord continue to do the task that our Lord + Jesus gave on the day of His ascension into Heaven. This task is our task until the Lord returns again on the Last Day. The Church goes into all the world and preaches the Gospel to all those who would hear and believe on the Lord. We hear the Lord speak to us that our sins are forgiven on account of what He has done for us. Let us continue to believe and hold firm to this wonderful promise that He would have us believe and cherish.

For He has ascended into Heaven to prepare for us a place; a home. All those who cling to Him in faith, receive the eternal reward of a life in Heaven with our Lord + Jesus Christ. When our Lord calls us home, we will join Him and all the saints who have gone before us, and we will sing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom. We will be free to worship our Lord + Jesus for all of eternity without the stain of sin and shame that haunts us every day of our lives on this Earth. There in our heavenly homes we will be free from sin. We will be perfectly righteous. We will have new and glorious bodies that are not worn out from ravages of this sinful world. We will have this wonderful life someday.

But, our Lord + Jesus Christ has not left us alone in the meantime. He is here with us today as we gather around His Throne of Grace to worship Him in truth and purity. And He is here among us today to preach into our ears the wonderful Gospel of what He has done for us and still continues to do for us through the Blessed Sacraments. Let us therefore give thanks to our Lord + Jesus Christ for His wonderful gifts and humbly kneel before His altar and receive the gifts that He desires to give to us throughout our lives, until He comes again in glory on the Last Day. And let us continue to do the task that He gave us, the Church, to do: go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. May the Lord grant us grace to do His will. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Son of the Most High, Who no longer dwellest on Earth in lowliness and poverty, but art seated at the right hand of the Father, a mighty Lord over all things in Heaven and on Earth, filling and ruling all: we beseech Thee, send us Thy Holy Spirit, give us faithful ministers, endow them with Thy gifts and keep them in Thy Word, hinder Satan and all tyrants, and mightily protect Thy kingdom on Earth, until all enemies are laid at Thy feet, and we overcome sin, death, and all things by Thee, Who livest and reignest with God the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!