

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 5:20-26
July 28th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Agree with Your Adversary Quickly

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we confess that we are poor, wretched sinners, and that there is no good in us, our hearts, flesh and blood being so corrupted by sin, that we never in this life can be without sinful lust and concupiscence; therefore we beseech Thee, dear Father, forgive us these sins, and let Thy Holy Spirit so cleanse our hearts that we may desire and love Thy Word, abide by it, and thus by Thy grace be forever saved; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee 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 Law of God is not evil. The Ten Commandments are not evil. Our Lord + Jesus, the Christ in the Gospel from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew in today's reading places special emphasis on the Law in His Sermon on the Mount. He does not discard it. In fact, He makes the requirements of the Law even more strict than the religious leaders of His day were making it. If the Law of God was evil, the Lord + Jesus would discard it. He would get rid of it. But He does not tell those who are listening to His Sermon on the Mount to stop doing the Law; to do whatever is in their evil hearts. No, He makes the requirements of the Law even more strict.

The Law of God is not evil, but our breaking of the Law of God—the Ten Commandments—is. Our sinful actions are evil. Our sinful actions should be discarded. We should obey the Law of God. We should observe the Ten Commandments. We should not only avoid doing what the Commandments forbid us to do in thought, word and deed, but we should also do what the Commandments require us to do toward God and our neighbor in thought, word and deed. Because we are unable to do this, we have a tendency to think that the Law of God is our enemy. There are many in this society, and even those who claim to be Christians in the Church, who have already done away with those Laws of God which do not fit their political ideology.

This is not what the Church should do. The Church should not do away with the Law of God just because we are unable to keep the Law. Nor should we do away with the Law just because our sinful hearts desire to do whatever it pleases contrary to the Law of God.

However, that puts us in a bad spot. If the Law is good, and we are to do it, how are we to be saved? For, we continually break the Law of God. Even if we manage to keep certain tenets of the Law; if we do not murder, or commit adultery, or steal from our neighbor, and the like, we still have the original sin that we inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve, which convicts us all of wrongdoing. We cannot escape the penalty of the Law. We cannot escape the reward for breaking the Law. We have all inherited death on account of our daily and continual breaking of the Ten Commandments. There is no way that we can do what our Lord + Jesus says we should do in the opening verse of today's Gospel

pericope. Our righteousness cannot exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Therefore, as our Lord says, we can by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven by virtue of our righteousness—by our keeping of the Law.

Further, our adversary, the devil, stands ready to accuse of wrongdoing whenever we sin. Satan is ready to pounce on our every little misdeed, and careless thought and word. His judgment has already been determined, and because of his hatred for all of God's creation, especially us, he is ready to point the accusing finger at us, and call us to account for all of our sinful thoughts, words and deeds.

There are those who are tempted to deny their sinfulness. They say, "I am not that bad of a person." They say, "At least I am not as bad as that other person." But we are not going to avoid the penalty of the Law—death—because of our judgment of our actions based on the actions of other people. Just because we may sin less, in our own minds, than someone else, it does not mean that we are therefore free from the punishment of the Law. For, we have our own sins that we stand rightly accused of before the holy throne of God. And our accuser, the devil, is all too eager to see us condemned and join him for all eternity in Hell.

This is why our Lord + Jesus says that we should agree with our adversary quickly. We should quickly and readily confess our sinfulness. Agree with our adversary the devil that we are indeed poor, miserable sinners. We do deserve God's eternal wrath and displeasure. We should daily confess our sins to God the Father, even as we do every Sunday in the General Prayer, and more specifically when we confess our sins to God in the presence of the Pastor in Private Confession. When we confess our sins, we acknowledge that no good thing lives in us; that we have indeed merited God's eternal wrath and displeasure and are quite deserving of death and Hell.

But, we having confessed our sins in contrition—in sorrow over our sins—we also cling in faith to the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We are unable to fulfill the Law, but our Lord + Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly on our behalf. He kept the tenets of the Law for us. Our righteousness may not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, but our Lord's righteousness is a perfect righteousness, and far exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

This righteousness of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ is credited to us. We are gifted with His merits and righteousness on account of our faith in Him and His promises which He makes to us. St. Paul said it best in his epistle to the Church of Rome from our epistle reading for today. We were baptized into Christ.

Our Holy Baptism washed away the sins hung around our necks. Those sins drowned us in the waters of Holy Baptism, so that by the work of the Holy Ghost, we have been raised from the death we faced in those waters, and have been given a new life—a life of righteousness. Our life of righteousness is not based upon our doing and keeping of the Law of God; it is not based on our ability to fulfill the Ten Commandments. Our righteousness is the righteousness of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ merited to us.

Therefore, the adversary can point his boney finger at us all he wants to, and accuse us of being sinners all he wants to, but his accusations will fall on deaf ears, for our Lord God heavenly Father only sees the perfect merits of His One and Only Beloved Son, + Jesus Christ when He looks at us. The heavenly Father sees in us only His elect children. For we have been made righteous, that is, justified, by our faith in the One and Only Savior + Jesus, the Christ.

This is why the Law of God is not evil, especially for us poor, miserable sinners who daily live in their Holy Baptism by daily confessing their sins, and trusting in our Lord's once and for all time innocent sacrifice which paid the penalty for our sins on the tree of the holy cross. For the Law of God holds no

penalty for us. That penalty has been paid by our Lord + Jesus Christ. And His reward that He won on the tree of the holy cross, has been gifted to us through our faith in the promises preached to us in the holy Gospel, and in our participation in the blessed Sacraments.

The Law of God is not evil. Our breaking of the Law of God is evil. However, we continue to strive to keep the Law, not because we hope to achieve some level of righteousness that we could never achieve through our keeping of the Law, but because through the Law we honor God and serve our neighbor. We show our fear and love for the God Who redeemed and saved us by the suffering and death of His Only-Begotten Son. And we show our love for our fellow man by doing the same good towards him, that we would want done to us.

Therefore, agree with your adversary quickly and daily confess your transgressions to the Lord God heavenly Father. Come often to Private Confession, and hear for your very own ears that you are forgiven for the sake of Christ's merits. Learn to love the Law of God, but learn more to admit when you have disobeyed His Law, and trust in the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus for your salvation. For His righteousness far exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, and He passes that righteousness on to you on account of your faith and trust in Him and Him alone. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord God, enter not into judgment with us, who have not from the heart kept Thy commandments, but regard the precious merit of Thy dear Son, and let us ever be partakers of His righteousness. Enable us also by Thy Holy Spirit to walk in Thy fear, true faith, and holiness of living, and to beware of pride and security, that we may not be cast into everlasting prison, but enter into Thy eternal kingdom; through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with 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!