

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 18:9-14
September 1st, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Who Humbles Himself

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 beseech Thee so to guide and direct us by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not forget our sins and be filled with pride, but continue in daily repentance and renewal, seeking our comfort only in the blessed knowledge that Thou wilt be merciful unto us, forgive us our sins, and grant us eternal life; through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, 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.

Salvation does not come from ourselves. There is no good thing living in us. We daily sin much. We break the Commandments both in our thoughts and words, and even in our works. We are full of sins that we commit, and empty of good deeds which we fail to do. And even if we can stop looking at all of the evil thoughts, words and deeds that we do, and all of the good thoughts, words and deeds that we fail to do, we still have this pestering thing called “original sin.” We have inherited this original sin from our first parents, Adam and Eve. We bear the curse that they acquired by their eating from the tree from which they were not to eat. Therefore, we are full of sin, and we will never be able to do all of the good works necessary to bring ourselves salvation.

There is only One Who can bring us salvation. That Man is the Lord + Jesus Christ. He perfectly fulfilled the Law which we break daily and continuously. He bore the punishment of our transgressions in His Body on the tree of the holy cross. He bore the mockery, shame, spitting, scourging, beating, crucifixion and death that we deserve on account of our manifold transgressions. Only He is worthy to be called “righteous.” Only He is worthy to be justified before the Lord God heavenly Father. We can only be justified through faith in His works and merits. We cannot be justified by our own works and merits.

We know this to be true. However, there are still people in the Church on Earth who continuously put all the good things that they do before themselves and before God. The Pharisee in today’s Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke is such a person. He stands as a stark warning to us.

The Pharisees were the model Jews of their time. No one in their society would question a Pharisee’s righteousness. Every outward thing they did was a model of what one desired to be in terms of righteous acts. We are even given examples by the Pharisee in the parable told by our Lord + Jesus. He did not extort people for money. He did not commit adultery. He was not an unjust thief; respecting other people’s possessions and money. The Pharisees not only did not break the Commandments—at least outwardly—but they also did other good deeds that in their mind were worthy of praise. The

Pharisee in the parable fasted twice a week and gave a tenth of everything he owned.

These works go even beyond what God required. The Triune Lord God in the Old Testament only required fasting one day a year; on the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur. The nation of Israel in addition to that over the course of their history—to mark historic events—added a total of four days a year of fasting. We see from this parable that the Pharisees of our Lord + Jesus Christ's day fasted twice a week. They fasted on Mondays and Thursdays—the second and fifth days of the week. This means that they went above and beyond what the Lord God commanded in regards to fasting and even above and beyond what the nation of Israel required.

Not only did their fasting go above what was required but we see from this parable that even their tithing went above and beyond what was required. He gave a tenth of everything he had. As our Lord + Jesus says in the Eleventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, the Pharisees tithed mint, rue and all sorts of herbs. They gave ten percent of everything that they had. But they lacked one thing; the only thing necessary. They lacked humility; the humility that comes from faith. As we talked about in last Sunday's Bible class, the Pharisees were very good at going through all the outward signs of righteousness, they dressed the right way, they acted the right way, they were nice to the right people, but outward works mean absolutely nothing if these things do not proceed from the heart of faith.

We have the same temptations as the Pharisees. We can be tempted to say, "I go to church regularly."; "I pray often."; "I read the Bible daily." "I am not that bad of a person."; "I am not like other more evil people."; and the like. All these things are good things; do not get me wrong. Everything that the Pharisee in the parable listed were good things; things that everybody should be doing. But our focus should not be on what we are doing. It especially should not be on what good we are doing, because we cannot save ourselves by our good works. No, our focus should always be on the works and merits of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. His works and merits win us forgiveness, life and salvation. A heart that is right—that is full of faith—knows to look not to its good deeds, but to the good deeds of our One and Only Savior, + Jesus Christ.

Such was the prayer of the tax collector. He actually did look inside of himself, but all he found was corruption. We can clearly see that the Pharisee and tax collector have very little in common. But they do have one thing in common. They both think they are the only person like themselves. The Pharisee thinks he is the only person who does good and does not sin; he thinks he is the only person who is righteous. The tax collector, however, thinks he is the only person who is a sinner. In the Greek language the word sinner carries the definite article "the." Meaning what he actually said was, "Be merciful to me THE sinner." He is the only one unworthy of being called righteous. He does not deserve God's mercy, but he begs for it anyway.

This tax collector sounds a lot like St. Paul from the Epistle reading to the Church of Corinth. *"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* We would consider St. Paul to be one of the greatest apostles, for he planted many churches among the Gentiles, and did it at the expense of his own personal safety. He was even beheaded for his efforts. But St. Paul did not consider himself to be worthy of such praise, and considered himself unworthy to be called an apostle.

This is why when we are tempted to name all of the good things that we do, going to church, reading the bible, praying daily, our words should not end with what we have done or are doing. Our words should end with the *Confiteor*—the Confession of our sins; the acknowledge meant that we are THE sinner. Our words should end with the words of this tax collector, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

It has been mentioned before about how the world saw the Pharisees, but it is also good to reflect on how the Jews viewed tax collectors. Tax collectors would negotiate contracts with the Romans

in order that they might collect taxes for land and water. And once they had procured the contract, they would add to what was required in order to line their own pockets. They were considered especially corrupt. No one would think that there was anything worthy in a tax collector that was worthy of being justified before God. But here in this parable, the Pharisee, who everyone would consider righteous by his outward acts was not justified, and the tax collector who nobody would consider righteous by his corrupt deeds was justified. All because our Lord does not judge by the outward acts, but by what is in the heart.

Faith clings to that which is outside of itself. In faith we cling to the works and merits of the Christ. We look away from our own works—we humble ourselves in confession and beg for mercy—and look to the works and merits of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ that He did for us on the tree of the holy cross.

You will notice that the title of this sermon is “He Who Humbles Himself.” Certainly, we should humble ourselves on account of our manifold transgressions and on account of original sin which adheres to us. We should humble ourselves and confess our sins, and look for salvation in our Lord + Jesus alone. He who humbles himself in this way has found the mercy that he seeks. But the title to this sermon is really about our Lord + Jesus. He is the One Who humbled Himself to come down from Heaven, put away His Divine Nature, and put on our flesh, all so that He could fulfill the Law which we are unable to do. Furthermore, He humbled Himself by allowing Himself to be mocked, beaten, scourged, and crucified to death; all for us. He humbled Himself so that we would have the mercy that we beg for, and would have Someone in which we could put our faith. Our faith clings to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ Who supplies us with mercy and grace.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not look at our good works, and think that we have done something worthy of grace, but instead look to the good works that our Lord did on our behalf. And, let us also not look at our sins, for as unworthy as they make us to receive grace and mercy. Our Lord chose to come into this world to save sinners such as you and I. Let us always remember to give thanks to our Lord + Jesus for showing mercy to us poor, miserable sinners. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O God, Who resistest the proud, and givest grace to the humble, grant unto us true humility, after the likeness in which Thine only Son hath revealed it in Himself, that we may never be lifted up and provoke Thy wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of the gifts of Thy grace; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth, and reigneth with Thee 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!