

Midweek Advent Vespers 2
St. Luke 1:26-35
December 11th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Of His Kingdom There Will Be No End

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.

The Angel Gabriel is busy in the first part of the Advent season preparing the way for our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ by proclaiming that the time for His arrival is coming soon. Last Wednesday we heard in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke how the Angel Gabriel appeared to the priest Zacharias. He announced to him that he and Elizabeth would bear a son named John. This son would go before the Lord + Jesus to prepare His way; much in the same way that the Angel Gabriel prepared the world for our Lord's coming by making the necessary announcements. In a sense the Angel Gabriel is living up to his name. His name means, "the strength of God." The strength of God is shown through the Angel Gabriel by sending him to announce the arrival of God in the flesh.

The Angel Gabriel prepares the world, and us, for the birth of the Savior + Jesus Christ by making the greatest of announcements to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This young maiden, who is betrothed to St. Joseph, will be overshadowed by the Holy Ghost and conceive in her womb, and bear the Son of God. This is why she is called "Theotokos," the Bearer of God. She will give birth to a Child; a human Child. She who is a daughter of Adam and Eve, and of the house and lineage of King David will bear a Son. But this Son will also be God. The Child to be born will be both man and God. The Lord God's strength will be revealed in the Person of the Lord + Jesus of Nazareth, Who will be born in Bethlehem. Therefore, the Lord God sends "the strength of God"—the Angel Gabriel—to announce to the Virgin Mary and to all those who hear this Gospel from the Evangelist St. Luke that our Savior is coming.

We hear about our Lord's coming to us in three ways during this Advent season. He came to us when He came down from Heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. He comes to us whenever two or more of us gather around His holy Word and receive His gifts—receive Him—and He grants us the gifts He won through His works and merits—forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. He will come on the Last Day and take us to our eternal home in Heaven. All three of these ways our Lord comes to us are present in the announcement of the Angel Gabriel.

The Angel Gabriel announces to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she will bear a Son—the Son of God. This event has already happened for us, and we celebrate this wonderful and historic event on the 25th of December. Our Lord + Jesus has come to us—the Lord God, Creator of the world and all things—is born as a man. He puts on our flesh, so that He might redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. God becomes man for us, so that we might have life—eternal life—with Him and all

the saints and angels. By announcing the birth of the Savior + Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary, the Angel Gabriel is really proclaiming to all who hear and believe that we get to join him and the whole company of Heaven for all eternity. He is inviting us to dwell with him and all the saints and angels with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ for all eternity.

The Angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that the Son of God which she will bear in our flesh “will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end.” There are certainly eternal aspects to this proclamation. The Kingdom that our Lord + Jesus will bestow upon us on the Last Day will last forever. His Kingdom will have no end. We will sing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom surrounded by all the saints and angels for all eternity as the whole of Heaven is filled with the smoke of the incense from the golden censurs. This obviously is the third way our Lord will come to us that we focus upon in the Advent season.

But, this Kingdom—this eternal Kingdom—does not start on the Last Day. It does not begin when our Lord + Jesus judges the quick and the dead. We will certainly enjoy this Kingdom eternally when we die, or when our Lord + Jesus returns in all of His glory, whichever is first, but we already can enjoy this Kingdom now in these last days—in this present generation. For the Lord + Jesus has already established His Kingdom through the works and merits that He accomplished while He lived with us on Earth. He established His eternal Kingdom through His perfect obedience to the Law and will of God, and He signed the deed to our eternal home when He offered up His life as a ransom for us on the tree of the holy cross. He bought and paid for us with His own holy, innocent and precious Blood.

Then He sent out His Apostles to establish His Kingdom on Earth. He established His Kingdom on Earth through the Apostles work of building the Church on Earth. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus comes to us in this present generation through His preached Word and His administered Sacraments. He is reigning over the house of Jacob—the Church—in these last days. This Kingdom in which we live will have no end. The Church will not end. It will be glorified and magnified and adorned as a Bride for her wedding. All of the sin and shame that we endure in this world will be removed from us.

The Church will no longer suffer persecution. The saints will no longer endure hardship, pain and torment. We get foretastes to these eternal realities when we gather together around the Word of God. Our Lord + Jesus gives us a taste of what Heaven will be like when He pours into our ears His wonderful promises of forgiveness, life and salvation. He has indeed washed us clean in our Holy Baptism; made us co-heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. He has given us a place in the Kingdom. He has made us citizens of Heaven through our Holy Baptism. And He reminds us continuously through His preached Word and through His very own Body and Blood given in bread and wine that not only are we citizens of Heaven and will enjoy the eternal heavenly realms, but He even gives a foretaste of what the wedding feast of Heaven will be like.

In this life we eat bread and drink wine and remember our Lord’s death for us. In Heaven this feast will so great and wonderful no human words can describe it. Even St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, in the Book of the Revelation could only give us a glimpse of what Heaven is like with his descriptions of the beatific vision.

We get to enjoy only a shadow—an image in a mirror darkly—of the glories of Heaven. The Angel Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary and proclaimed to her that she would give birth to the Savior of the world. He proclaimed to Zacharias the priest that his son would be the forerunner of the Savior, and would point mankind to the Savior. God’s strength is in sending messengers before His face who proclaim His coming, so that all mankind might look on Him as their Savior in faith, and be saved from all their enemies for all eternity. Moses and the Prophets were sent to prepare the way of the Lord + Jesus. The Angel Gabriel was sent to prepare the way for the Lord + Jesus. St. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the Lord + Jesus. And after our Lord + Jesus came the Apostles proclaimed

to all the world all the good things that He has done for mankind. He has brought salvation to all men through His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death on our behalf.

The Ministers of our Lord are still sent to us today to turn our eyes to the Lord + Jesus. Your pastor desires to lead you into the eternal Kingdom that has been prepared for you. Of our Lord's Kingdom there will be no end. We enjoy this Kingdom now as we live in the Christian Church in this world. We will enjoy this Kingdom in Heaven when our Lord + Jesus calls us out of this vale of tears to our eternal home.

Our Lord + Jesus is the Son of the Highest—the Son of our heavenly Father. To Him has been given by the Lord God heavenly Father the throne of King David. He reigns from this throne for all eternity. This altar is a symbol of that throne of our Lord + Jesus for us in this life. When we get to Heaven we will no longer see and worship in symbol and shadow, but will see the Lord + Jesus in all of His glory. We will kneel and bow before Him, and He will reign over us all for all eternity. Then the whole company of Heaven will sing the eternal liturgy, and we will join our voices to theirs as we rejoice eternally that our sins have been paid for, and we have been granted an eternal life in Heaven. May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. 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!