

Midweek Lenten Vespers 3
St. John 8:42-51
March 18th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Proceeded Forth and Came from God

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.

This Gospel from the Evangelist and Apostle St. John fills in the context for the Gospel for Judica (Passion Sunday), where the Jews are trying to convict our Lord + Jesus of sin and having a demon. The Jews in their jealousy do not want the Lord + Jesus to be the Messiah. They do not only reject Him as their Messiah, but they do not want the Lord to be the Messiah of anyone. They desire to withhold the truth from everybody. This is why our Lord + Jesus tells them that they are of their father the devil. For the devil, with his cohorts of the world and our sinful flesh, do not want us to hear the truth; they do not want us trusting in the Lord + Jesus for hope and salvation; they do not want us putting our faith and trust in the Lord + Jesus, for then we would cling to Him and His works on our behalf and be saved.

The Jews and their father the devil want all men to perish in their sinfulness. The Jews want people following and listening to their lies. They want to give the people a whole slough of requirements that they must keep in order to find God's grace. They only present the people with the Law of God. And even then, it is only at best the outward tenets of the Law mingled with a whole bunch of self-created works that are supposed to merit them God's favor.

This is no different than at the time of the Reformation when the Papists wanted to give the people a whole laundry list of things to do in order to gain God's grace and favor: rosaries, praying to saints, claiming that performing certain rites merited the forgiveness of sins, and the like. They even made the Blessed Sacraments into works. They taught that people received forgiveness by just the mere doing of the Sacraments. No faith was required to grasp onto the gifts given in the Sacraments. This is what the phrase *ex opere operato* means. By the mere doing of the commandment, without faith people were supposed to receive the benefits. But a heart that does not believe what the Sacrament gives and offers, cannot receive any benefit, for such a heart does not know what it receives.

Such is the same for all such works designed to merit God's grace. The Lord God is not impressed with your church attendance if you are just doing it out of habit, or to appease family members, or because you think it impresses other people. The Lord God desires your attendance here to give you His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. He wants us to cling to His benefits that we receive in this holy house. Coming to church is not about you performing some good work, it is about what the Lord God does for you. He desires that we hear about His Son, our Lord, + Jesus, and cling to His works and merits.

When we are here in this sanctuary because we think we are doing a good work and something pleasing to the Lord God, and not because we want to receive the good gifts that our Lord wants to give us, we are no different than the Jews in today's Gospel reading and the Papists, both at the time of the Reformation and they still teach this even today. We turn the grace of the Lord God into a work that we must earn. This is exactly what the devil, the father of lies, wants us to believe. For the devil wants us searching inside of ourselves for some good that we can put forth to say, "Hey, look how great and grand I am. Look what a good person I am; what a great Christian." Do not fall into that trap.

The Lord + Jesus wants to bring us the truth. What is His truth? That He has proceeded forth and come from the Lord God heavenly Father. Why did He come? He came to fulfill the Law which we are unable to fulfill. He knows just how weak and helpless we are to keep the Law. The Law condemns us, for we daily break it. We do not fully trust in the Triune Lord God at all times, perfectly. This is what the Lord God requires of us in regards to His Law. He requires that we keep it perfectly, and without blemish. This is why it is a dangerous thing to put forth our crummy works as propitiation for our sins. This is why it is dangerous for someone to say that they are going to give their heart to the Lord + Jesus. The Lord God does not want our crummy hearts. Our hearts are full of sin and corruption; they are full of every sort of evil thought, word and deed.

This is why in this season of Lent the Church's focus is on the Ten Commandments. We are to examine and learn the Ten Commandments, so that we might see just how little we keep them, and see what great need we have of a Savior to fulfill the Law of God for us. We examine the Ten Commandments now and see what poor, miserable sinners we are, so that when we come to Private Confession, we can rightly confess our sins to the Lord God before the Pastor. This is what Luther teaches in the Small Catechism to examine ourselves according to the Ten Commandments daily.

This examining of ourselves according to the Ten Commandments during this time of Lent, leads us to Passiontide, the last two weeks of Lent, in which the Church's focus switches from our examination of ourselves and our breaking of the Law, to the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Our Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven and took upon Himself our flesh—He became a man—so that He might fulfill the Law of God as a man; so that He might fulfill the Law which we are unable to keep, for us. Then having perfectly fulfilled the Law on our behalf as a man like us, He then offers up His life as a ransom for us. He takes upon Himself our punishment. He suffers the death that we deserve. He wins for us, and all mankind, atonement for our sins. So that all those who believe on these works and merits of the Christ, have forgiveness, life and salvation.

The father of lies, and all his minions that want to have us trusting in our works to earn salvation, do not want us placing our faith and trust in the works and merits of the Christ. They want us listening to and believing their lies. They do not want us to have a Messiah. They do not want us to have a Christ and Savior. They want us believing that our works profit us in some way, so that we can disregard our Lord and Savior. They want us turning our Lord + Jesus, our Savior, into some sort of buddy or pal, or our co-pilot; Someone Who is merely along for the ride as we pointlessly try to save ourselves by our own keeping of the Law.

But our Lord + Jesus proceeded forth and came from the Lord God so that we might hear and believe the truth. He has come to be our Messiah; our Christ. He has come to fulfill the Law perfectly for us. He has come to suffer on the tree of the holy cross our punishment for breaking the Law. He wants us to come into this place of worship to hear Him and what He has done for us, so that we might believe on Him, and trust that in Him alone our salvation is to be found. He wants us to hear from the Pastor, as if He was telling us Himself, that our sins are forgiven for His sake. He wants us to rejoice in the gifts that He gives us through Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. For in this place He gives us freely of Himself, so that we might not despair over our sinfulness, nor be puffed up with pride in our ability to do simple self-prescribed works in order to gain favor with our fellowman.

He has proceeded forth and come from the Lord God, so that we might cling to Him fully. Therefore, let us cast aside the lies of the father of lies, the devil, and cling to the truth that our Lord + Jesus wants us to hear. He has come to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil, because we are not able to do it ourselves. He has come to take us out of the power of the father of lies, and give us a true Father, a heavenly Father, Who loves us enough to send to us His Only-Begotten Son, so that we might have forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation in Him alone. Thanks be to God! 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!