

Midweek Lenten Vespers 1
St. Luke 22:24-32
March 4th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

There Was Also a Dispute Among Them

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 past Sunday we heard the history of the fall into sin of our first parents, who having been tempted by the devil, that serpent of old, sinned and passed on that sin to all their children, including us. We also heard the history of our Lord's first recorded temptation by the devil in the wilderness after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights. Unlike our first parents, our Lord and Brother, + Jesus Christ resisted the temptation of the devil through the Word of God, and began His ministry of perfectly fulfilling the Law and will of the Lord God on our behalf. Today, we also see a temptation in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. The Apostles are tempted by the desire to rule over their brothers. And so, we are told that a dispute broke out among them over who was the greatest; who among them was to be the leader.

This event takes place on the night of our Lord's betrayal and arrest. They are all gathered in the Upper Room to eat with our Lord + Jesus the first Lord's Supper. We learn from the Gospel of the Evangelist and Apostle St. John that this dispute arose because they were in the Upper Room alone with the Lord + Jesus without any servants. The servants would do the customary washing of the feet before the meal. Since there was no servant, the Apostles began to argue amongst themselves who was going to take up the task of washing the others' feet. Nobody wanted to take on the role of a servant. Nobody wanted to be considered less than his fellow Apostles.

Well, in comes our Lord + Jesus and what does He do? He begins to wash the feet of all the Apostles. He is among them as One Who serves. He sets the example. The Gentiles, that is, those who have no training in the Word of God and how one should act towards his fellowman, lord their position over one another. This is not the way it is supposed to be among the Apostles. They were to be willing servants. The greatest among them was to be as the younger. The one who governs among them was to be as a servant.

During the washing of the feet of the Apostles, St. Peter objects to the Lord + Jesus washing his feet. And, we will hear more about this when we hear that Gospel on Maundy Thursday, as we do every year. You will remember that after the Lord + Jesus tells him that whoever is not washed by Him will have no part in Him, St. Peter requests that the Lord + Jesus wash also his head and hands. But this was not necessary to get the point of our Lord across to His Apostles. He is among them as One Who serves. They must also take up the mantle of servants. Especially if they are going to be ministers of

the Word of God. You will notice that at the end of the Gospel reading our Lord has special words toward St. Peter. Which leads us to believe that this dispute that they were having among themselves centered around the Apostle St. Peter.

He indeed did become the chief Apostle. We see this on Pentecost, when he was the one who stood up before the crowds and proclaimed the good news of our Lord + Jesus Christ. And there are certainly many other examples from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. But St. Peter enjoys a place of honor among the Apostles even before our Lord's crucifixion and death. He, with Sts. James and John, were most times brought along by the Lord + Jesus to accompany Him when He went off by Himself: on the mount of transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane when our Lord prayed on their behalf to the heavenly Father before His crucifixion and death to name a couple of examples.

These three, Sts. Peter, James and John, would especially have cause to say they were greatest among the Apostles. We even hear in holy Scriptures of the two disciples coming to our Lord + Jesus to request to sit on His left and right when He comes into His glory. But this is precisely the temptation that our Lord + Jesus warns His Apostles about: thinking more highly of themselves than they ought. This is why our Lord + Jesus tells St. Peter that Satan has asked to sift Him as wheat. He thinks more highly of himself than he ought.

We know what happens to him in a few short hours. He is met with the opportunity to boldly stand with the Lord + Jesus in the midst of His trial, but he instead denies our Lord three times. St. Peter learned the high cost of being a disciple of the Lord + Jesus; the persecution that he would endure. He learned what it meant to be a servant of the Lord. It meant to realize that you are a sinful human being, and in continuous need of God's grace. He saw his sinfulness, and went out and wept bitterly.

But this made him especially trained to comfort and strengthen his fellow Apostles. For he knew what it was like to not only sin and find no comfort in his own ability to keep the will of God, but he also knew what it was like to receive forgiveness for his sins.

This is why the temptation to seek to be the greatest just does not work in the Christian Church. For we need to all realize what poor, miserable sinners we truly are; how much we daily need our Lord's forgiveness and grace. Only a person who is not aware, or ignores his sinfulness, can think that he is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. A person who knows that he is a sinner, and knows that his brother in Christ is a sinner, desires to bring all those who struggle with sin to the realization that their salvation and life is found in the Lord + Jesus Christ.

Our greatness is found in the works and merits of the Christ. He takes on the ultimate role of servant. He is the Lord God Almighty, and yet He comes down from Heaven and takes upon Himself our flesh, without sin, all so that He might fulfill the Law of God that we cannot keep, perfectly. And then He even shows Himself to be even more of a servant, when He lays down His very life to atone for the sins of the whole world. He gives up His life; He serves as the propitiation of our sins, so that all those who believe on His Name will have forgiveness, life and salvation.

The act of servant is an act of love. For love sacrifices itself on behalf of another. We know how sinful we are; therefore, we know how sinful our fellowman is. They are as racked with sin as we are. Therefore, we should show them the same forgiveness as we desire for ourselves. When a congregation shares with one another their sinfulness, and more importantly, the forgiveness that they have found in the One, True, Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, they are continuously strengthened with the knowledge that they have a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.

My dear friends, let us always resist the temptation to think more highly than we ought to about

ourselves, and remember that we are poor, miserable sinners in need of God's grace constantly. Then when we have learned of our own sin, and how powerless we are against it, let us serve our fellow brothers in Christ, by offering them comfort and strength by offering them the salvation that is found in our Lord + Jesus Christ alone. His death and perfect life are our salvation from the slings and arrows of the devil. Let us continuously cling to Him in faith. 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!