

Midweek Lenten Vespers 2
St. Mark 9:17-29
March 11th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Have Compassion on Us

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.

One of the features that makes the historic one-year series that we use far superior to the post-Vatican II three-year series is the texts in Lent. In Lent we get a steady diet of Gospels dealing with demon-possession. The modernism inherent in the three-year series wants to shy away from the devil and demons; it wants to shy away from our problem of having to deal with original sin daily and the corruption that is inborn in all of us. The historic one-year series wants to teach us that we are full of sin—original and actual sins—and that we are attacked daily by the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. Even though tonight's Gospel is not a part of the historic lectionary, the same holds true of this Gospel from the Evangelist St. Mark.

We have a man who has brought his only son to the Lord + Jesus to be healed of his demon-possession. However, the Lord + Jesus is not with the nine Apostles at the time. He is on the mount of transfiguration with Sts. Peter, James and John. Having come down from the mountain, our Lord + Jesus is met with a crowd disputing with the other Apostles about their inability to cast out a demon. We can imagine that the scribes and Pharisees were at the forefront of the discussion trying to discredit the Lord + Jesus by focusing the crowd's attention upon the fact that the followers of the Lord + Jesus were not able to heal this man of his demon-possession.

Now note that this is actually demon-possession. There are many modern theologians that want to say that this young boy only had epilepsy. While it is true that some of the symptoms of this poor lad are epileptic in nature, epilepsy does not cause one to become deaf and mute. Not only that, but our Lord + Jesus in the pericope specifically refers to the demon as a "deaf and dumb spirit." And St. Mark refers to him as a "unclean spirit." Both terms used of demons in other instances where our Lord + Jesus casts out a demon. This desire by modernists to diminish this narrative by saying that the boy is only troubled by epilepsy, denies inherently the existence of a demonic spiritual world; one that we are plagued with from all sides in this life.

In short, they want to do away with all talk about sin. They want to do away with talk about the corruption of the soul. They want to do away with our teaching on original sin; that we are born in sin and carry the sin of our first parents—original sin—with us all the days of our life. Our Lord + Jesus supports the teaching of original sin when he asks the father of the boy, "How long has this been happening to him?" The father's answer is telling: "From childhood." Our Lord is not asking with the

intention of a doctor assessing the condition of the patient. He is asking to show the father, that what he asks is not a simple thing. No other person in this boy's entire life has been able to drive out the demon possessing him. It also shows us the effect of original sin. If this boy has had this problem since he was a youth, there could be not great mortal sin that he could have done to merit this demon-possession. It is not because of some sin he committed, but it is a condition of the inborn sin that dwells in him and all mankind, because of the sin of our first parents.

We all bear the brunt of this original sin. We commit sins daily: anger, impatience, hatred, and the like. We also omit to do the good that is required of us toward both God and our neighbor. We have many sins that we commit every day because even though we have been baptized and all sins have been washed away in the waters of Holy Baptism, sin still inheres in our nature (as we read about yesterday in our Book of Concord readings from the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article II).

Not only do we have sin dwelling in us that causes us great shame and despair when we realize what poor sinners we truly are, but we see in this world the consequences that sin wreaks havoc upon this world and in our lives: sickness, pain, death, poverty, marital strife, and the like. All these things are a result of sin existing in our world. The devil and the world use these things to drive us away from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Our sinful flesh clings onto to these things and despairs over its inability to keep the Law of God, and is tempted to blame God for our inability to overcome these evils.

We are like the father in today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark. We doubt the Lord + Jesus. He says, "If you can do anything." A statement that clearly shows his lack of faith. This man has asked for compassion from the Lord + Jesus, but he does not really believe that it will be granted. Much like us when we pray for things lacking faith that the Lord God will actually grant them to us. Therefore, the Lord + Jesus must show this man, and us, that He does desire to have compassion, but He also wants us to teach us to have faith in Him and Him alone.

"All things are possible to him who believes." Now, many people with this statement of our Lord + Jesus want to turn Him into some sort of genie in a lamp granting countless wishes. Sadly, many people want this statement to refer to earthly treasures. But the heart of faith—a heart that truly clings to the Lord + Jesus for all good—properly asks for things that benefit the soul. This demon-possessed boy does not need wealth or fame. What does he need? He needs to have the demon removed. He needs to be free from the bondage that has enslaved him from youth.

We also have been in bondage to sin. We are enslaved daily because we are such poor, miserable sinners. We have the condition of original sin that we have add since we were conceived in the womb. It infects our whole lives and our whole world. Like this demon-possessed boy, we need to be free from our bondage to sin, death and the devil. That forgiveness is found only in the Lord + Jesus; in His works and merits on our behalf. Forgiveness is given to us when we cling in faith to the perfect fulfilling of the Law of God by our Lord + Jesus, and when we cling in faith to the sacrifice that He made for us on the tree of the holy cross where He defeated sin, death and the devil once and for all. Faith clings to our Lord and through this faith we are saved, because through faith we are justified and declared righteous in the sight of the Lord God. We are credited with our Lord + Jesus' works and merits, and our sins are no longer held against us.

However, like the father of this boy, we have our doubts, especially when a particular sin troubles us greatly. We lose faith. We doubt our Lord's mercy and compassion. Afterall, how can He have compassion on us when we are such poor, miserable sinners. There is no way He can love a poor sinful sap like me.

This is why the Lord + Jesus leads the father of this boy into faith. He shows him that sin troubles all mankind from our youth. He shows him that sin is not something that anyone can just get rid of; it is

something that will continue to plague us throughout our lives. More importantly, He shows this man that salvation is found only in Him. It is through faith in the Lord + Jesus that healing of sin is to be found. Therefore, with the father of this boy, our prayer should be, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" That is to say, when doubts assail us because of our sin, we pray that the Lord would through the Word of God open our hearts and ears to receive Him so that we might cling to Him and His works and merits in faith.

When He gives us His holy Word, He gives us His Holy Ghost, so that by Him we might receive faith to believe that for His sake we have forgiveness, life and salvation. When He grants us these things through the Word and the Sacraments, He is showing us compassion; the compassion that we have prayed for most diligently.

The modernists would have us to deny or shy away from the reality that there is an evil spiritual realm that seeks our eternal demise. They want us to all have happy feelings, and ignore the root cause of our despair: sin. Sin is not going to go away because we wish for it. It is not going to be done away with because we try to hide our true feelings in false joy and happiness. We are constantly attacked from all sides by the slings and arrows of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. This is why we must cling to the Lord + Jesus in faith. This faith is obtained through our daily prayer to the Lord + Jesus to cast out the demons that plague us. Sin cannot be driven out except through prayer and fasting. Therefore, having heard and studied the Word of God, even if it means giving up food to do so, let us cling in faith that the Lord + Jesus will answer our prayer for salvation. For all things are possible to him who believes, especially the forgiveness of our sins. 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!