

Holy Tuesday
St. John 12:24-43
April 7th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

If It Dies, It Produces Much Grain

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.

Today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John is a continuation of yesterday's Gospel. In that pericope our Lord was rejected by the Jews, and even His own disciple, Judas Iscariot plotted to betray Him for His public rebuke of him in the house of Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. We heard also about certain Greeks who came to St. Philip and said that they wished to see the Lord + Jesus. Sts. Philip and Andrew had come to the Lord + Jesus and told them that these Greeks wished to see Him. The Jews had rejected Him, and the Greeks desired to receive Him. To this our Lord's final words were, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

Our Lord's glory is found in His cross and death. It is a paradox. A cross and death by their very nature imply humiliation and defeat; not victory and glory. Our Lord uses the illustration of the grain of wheat falling into the ground. A seed that goes into the ground, dies. But in its death, it produces much grain. It provides bread to the eater and more seed to the sower. This illustration is meant for the Greek listeners. To Nicodemus, who came to our Lord + Jesus at night in the beginning of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John's Gospel, our Lord used an illustration with which any Jew would be familiar: He used the image of the serpent of Moses being lifted up so that all those who looked upon it might be saved through faith.

Our Lord + Jesus was lifted up on the tree of the holy cross. He suffered and died for the atonement of the sins of the whole world, so that all those who look to the cross—the work our Lord + Jesus accomplished on the holy cross—might be made righteous before the Lord God through faith. After bearing the punishment that we deserved—after bearing the full weight of God's wrath and displeasure—our Lord gave up His life willingly; He gave up His Spirit and died. For three days He was in the grave—in the ground—dead.

By this sacrifice—by this whole burnt sacrifice for the sins of the whole world as the Lamb of God—He has drawn all peoples to Him. The rejection of the Jews and the desire of the Greeks to see Him prompts our Lord + Jesus to see the fruit that will be produced on account of His suffering and death. He will draw all people to Himself. This is already begun in these certain Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the feast. They too had heard of the wonderful miracles and works of the Lord + Jesus. They too wanted to be a part of followers of the Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord's words to Sts. Philip and Andrew are not a statement of rejection of the Greeks. He does not say anything about His salvation being only for the Israelites or Jews. No, He only says that the hour has come for Him to be glorified. Now that His wonderful works are beginning to be heralded among the Greeks and Gentiles, it was time for Him to atone for the sins of the whole world, both Jew and Gentile alike. In His cross and Passion, He wins salvation for all mankind. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, between male and female, for all through faith in the Lord + Jesus are made children of the heavenly Father.

Satan had deceived the scribes and Pharisees; he had deceived one of the Lord's disciples—Judas Iscariot. Just like he had deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve. Through the deception of that old devil, Satan, mankind has had to suffer with death even until now. But this is why our Lord + Jesus came into the world. He came so that He might cast out the ruler of this world. He has come to suffer what would appear to anyone as humiliation and defeat, in order that He might be glorified and gain the victory for us.

The serpent bruised His heel, but our Lord + Jesus crushed the head of the serpent once and for all by His death. All of Adam and Eve, and all of their children, have suffered the same fate—death. We too, will suffer the consequences of the inborn sin in us; we too will die and be buried in the ground. But this is why our Lord + Jesus was sent by the heavenly Father, that He might destroy death and the grave once and for all. The heavenly Father has glorified the Name of the Lord + Jesus at His incarnation when He was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. In His incarnation—in His taking upon Himself our flesh and blood; our human nature—He was glorified as God became man. Therefore, the whole company of Heaven burst open the gates of Heaven and sang of this wonderful deed that would bring "Peace on Earth and goodwill to man." The Lord + Jesus born of the Blessed Virgin Mary was glorified as the Savior of mankind when He was born.

The heavenly Father will also glorify Him when He is lifted up on the tree of the holy cross to atone for the sins of the whole world. The thought of the pain that our Lord + Jesus will endure troubles Him. But there is no doubt about what He should do. He must suffer and die and be in the grave for three days, in order that He might become the firstfruits of all those who rise from the dead. He must defeat Satan through His death, so that we might be freed from his power, and through faith might attain eternal life with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ in Heaven with all the angels and the rest of the saints.

But this Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John also contains a warning for all mankind. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Jews would have blind eyes and hard hearts. St. John makes the point that this had come true in his time because the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied it. This prophecy was from the Lord God. The Prophet Isaiah makes the claim that the people of Israel were blind and hard-hearted because the Lord God caused them to be that way. The Lord God is the One Who made them blind and hard-hearted. This is not to be understood as if the Lord God worked against them to their destruction. The opposite is actually the case. On account of the continuous willful sinning and false idolatry of the people of Israel, the Lord God removed His mercy from them.

If they wanted to find righteousness in their false idols, or even in their own works, the Lord God was not going to stop them. He sent His prophets to them, but they rejected the prophets. Even through all the hard work of trying to call His people back to Himself, they continued to refuse. The preaching done by the prophets only caused the people of Israel to remain blind and hard-hearted, just as the Prophet Isaiah said.

This same warning holds true for all mankind today. Our Lord + Jesus continues to send His ministers to us to preach His holy Word, so that we might turn from our sin, and look to the One Who was lifted up on the tree of the holy cross to win for us atonement. Many people are called through the

Word of God, but few through the faith created by the working of the Holy Ghost are chosen by the Lord God, for many people, like the people of Israel, choose to remain blind and hard-hearted. Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to daily confess our sins to God the Father. Let us continue to daily drown the Old Adam, so that by the work of the Holy Ghost, and the faith implanted in us we may rise from the waters of Holy Baptism as a new creation each day.

The time has come for us to remember and proclaim once again that our Lord + Jesus was lifted up on the tree of the holy cross, so that by His death and resurrection, He might draw all men to Himself. He has caused us to be drawn to Him through faith. We cling to the cross of the Lord + Jesus, for we know what poor, miserable sinners we truly are, and how desperately we need the atonement of our sins that our Lord + Jesus wins for us by His suffering and death. We wish to see the Lord + Jesus. The Lord + Jesus through the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John shows us that if we want to see the Lord + Jesus we must look to the cross—the place upon which He draws all people to Himself. Through this cross He enters into the grave once and for all so that by His death He opens up our graves, and promises us an eternal life in Heaven with Him. Let us look upon Him and be saved. 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!