

The Third Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 15:1-10
June 28th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Rejoice with Me!

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we all like sheep have gone astray, having suffered ourselves to be led away from the right path by Satan and our own sinful flesh: We beseech Thee graciously to forgive us all our sins for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ; and quicken our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may abide in Thy Word, and in true repentance and a steadfast faith continue in Thy Church unto the end, and obtain eternal salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our society today there are those who want to excuse their sinful behavior by stating, “We are all sinners.” This is usually followed up with a statement about how the Lord God is a forgiving God, Who loves to forgive sinners. Of course, at the heart of their argument is the desire to go on committing the sin of which they are accused. They do not want to give up their sinfulness, and so they appeal to the Lord God’s forgiving nature. However, there is a huge problem with this sort of thinking. It is a true statement that we are all sinners, but not all sinners are the same. In the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke there are in fact two types of sinners mentioned in the pericope.

The first group of sinners are the tax collectors and sinners mentioned in the opening verse. The second group of sinners are the ones accusing the tax collectors and sinners of being sinners—the Pharisees and scribes. The second group stands in judgment of the first group. The Pharisees and scribes, in their self-righteousness, fail to see their own sin, and accuse the tax collectors and sinners of their sins. Next Sunday’s Gospel reading from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Luke will talk more about judging when it is inappropriate.

There is a difference, however, between the two groups of sinners—between the tax collectors and sinners, and the Pharisees and scribe. The difference is that the tax collectors and sinners have repented of their sin, while the Pharisees and scribes, filled with pride and self-righteousness, fail to even admit their sinfulness. This is the same problem with our society today. People so cling to their sin that they refuse to confess that they are sinners; they live in impenitence. They mistakenly think, like the Pharisees and scribes, that there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness. Of course, our society lets them go on in their sinfulness, even applauding them for their behavior, and excoriating any who would dare desire to bring these open and manifest sinners into a state of repentance. The same is true of the Pharisees and scribes in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, they are the ones praised for their seeming righteousness, while the tax collectors and sinners, who live in repentance, are denounced.

People tend to forget, or perhaps they just do not want to admit, that the statement that we are

all sinners is a true statement, but they fail to actually understand what that means. Original sin—the sin we inherited from our first parents inheres to our nature. It clings to us and pulls us down into the grave. This is why we are all sinners, but not all sinners are the same. For some sinners repent of their sin; they confess their sin, and want to live lives according to the Commandments of the Lord God. The other group of sinners fails to admit that they have sin at all. Even in the case of the person saying that, “We are all sinners” and “God is a forgiving God.” This is really just an excuse for them to go on living in their sin, they do not want you to be looking at their sin; they do not even want to admit that they have sin.

Our Lord + Jesus uses the parable in today’s Gospel to attempt to show the Pharisees and scribes their sin of self-righteousness; that they too are sinners in need of repentance. He does this by showing them that they lack mercy. This is how the Lord + Jesus begins the parable by pointing out to them that they would be merciful (another theme from next Sunday’s Gospel reading) to a lost sheep, but they are not being merciful to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is why the Lord + Jesus begins the parable by saying, “What man of you?” He draws them into the parable by showing them how they would react if they lost one of their animals. They care more for an animal than they do for their fellowman. They would search diligently for the lost sheep, and yet they criticize our Lord + Jesus for doing that exact same thing with the tax collectors and sinners.

There is joy in Heaven over those who repent; who turn away from their sin and cling to the Lord + Jesus in faith. The tax collectors and sinners draw near to the Lord + Jesus because His Word is truth; He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. They see Him for Who He is, the One Who can save them from their sins; the One Who can offer and give forgiveness. Forgiveness which they are not getting from the Pharisees and scribes—the so-called religious leaders of the day. Not only are they not offering forgiveness, but they are attacking the Lord + Jesus because He wants to offer it to these repentant sinners.

The tax collectors and sinners have done what the Apostle St. Peter writes in his Epistle. They have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of the Lord God. They have learned their place. They understand that forgiveness is only found in the Lord God; it is only found in the Lord + Jesus Who is the Lord God. They understand that the devil prowls around like roaring lion seeking who he may devour and that they are tasty. The Pharisees and scribes are oblivious to this fact. They are oblivious to their own sin; to their own destruction. They are being chewed up and eaten by the devil, and refuse to admit or acknowledge that they are in such peril. Just like many in our society today.

This is why the Good Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus—leaves the ninety-nine and seeks the one lost sheep. Even one lost sheep is very precious to Him. He leaves His home in Heaven and comes down to dwell with us in the flesh, so that He might lead us all into repentance, and bring us back into the eternal home that He prepared for all of us repentant sinners. He placed the lost sheep on His shoulders; He placed our sins on His shoulders on the tree of the holy cross. He brings us back from the wilderness of sin and death by His own innocent death and by His shed blood. Those who have repented of their sins, who have confessed that they are sinners and in need of the Lord God’s grace, cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. We draw near to the Lord + Jesus in faith. For in Him alone is found salvation. In Him we find rescue from the wilderness of sin and death. We find rescue in Him from the prowling lion, the devil.

He is the One Who comes down to us and takes upon Himself our flesh so that He might draw us to Himself, and rescue us from sin, death and the power of the prowling lion, the devil. He brings us back into the fold—back to the ninety-nine—so that we may be reunited with all believers in Christ. He brings us back to our eternal home in Heaven. The home which He has prepared for us by His innocent suffering and death. The home which is assured to us by His resurrection from the dead. Just as He has risen from the dead, we too will rise from the dead on the Last Day. For He will draw all those who cling

to Him in faith to Himself in Heaven. All those who live in repentance and fear; who have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of the Lord God, will live with Him and all the angels and saints in Heaven for all eternity.

For our Lord + Jesus not only receives sinners and eats with them but He actively seeks them out so that they might live with Him for all eternity. Even though our Lord + Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the heavenly Father, He still continues to seek that which was lost through the Church. By the light of the Gospel—the preaching of the Word of the Lord God and the administering of the Blessed Sacraments—the Church seeks to enlighten the whole world. She sweeps the entire house of the world, and searches carefully for all those who desire to be free from their bondage of sin.

It is now our task—as the Church in this location—to seek the lost. We do that through the light of the Gospel. In the preaching of the pure Word of God, and through the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, we are sweeping away the dirt and grime of sin. We are searching carefully for those who confess their sins—who repent of their sins—and want to receive forgiveness. Through the light of the Gospel we are cleansing this world full of sin and dirt. Through the meal that we eat with our Lord + Jesus we are being drawn closer to Him, for He has come to us to draw us to Himself. For this reason, that the sinners are repenting of their sins and clinging to the Lord + Jesus in faith—because sinners are being justified by faith—there is much rejoicing in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, rejoice with me! For our Lord + Jesus, our Shepherd and Bishop of our souls has come down from Heaven to seek and save us poor, lost, miserable sinners. And He continues to draw us to Himself by placing in our midst His Bride, the Church. In this Church we get to be received by our Lord + Jesus when He comes to us through the Liturgy, and He eats and drinks with us in His Supper; the Supper in which He gives us His very own Body and Blood to eat and drink in, with and under bread and wine. When we eat this meal, it is a form of rejoicing, for in this meal we remember and proclaim His death for us. We remember and proclaim that by His death He was won for us forgiveness for all of our sins.

He has forgiven us of our sins, for we desire to be freed from them. Like the tax collectors and sinners in the Gospel reading, we too draw near to the Lord + Jesus, for we know that we are full of sin, and have much from which we need rescue. We know that on account of our sins, the devil prowls around us seeking to devour us, so that we may be lost forever with him. The Pharisees and scribes, and all those in our society today, who want to remain in their sin; who do not want to confess their sin to the Lord + Jesus; who want to remain in their impenitence and self-righteousness are at the mercy of the prowling lion in the wilderness. It is our task, as the Church in this place, to continue to shed the light of the Gospel into all corners of the house of the world, so that all those who are lost may be found.

Even as our Lord + Jesus continued to seek the lost Pharisees and scribes by telling them this parable, in order that they might see the error of their thinking and be drawn to Him, just as the tax collectors and sinners had been drawn to Him. It is a great loss when someone is destroyed by the devil and the world and their own sinful flesh. We are all sinners, but not all sinners are the same. Some choose to continue living in their sinfulness; they embrace the sin in their lives, and have no need of a Savior. This is why it is a cause for great rejoicing when even one person repents and believes on the Lord + Jesus. For that person will be rescued from the wilderness of sin and death, and be rescued from the prowling lion of the devil. May the Light of the Gospel continue to go out into all the world and enlighten this dark world, so that many more lost sheep and coins may be drawn to the only Savior, our Lord + Jesus Christ, and we may sit down with Him and eat and drink in the Kingdom of Heaven, where there will be eternal rejoicing over what He has done for us poor, miserable lost sheep. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Gracious Lord Jesus Christ, Who came'st into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, and art not ashamed of the company of sinners, we thank Thee for Thy goodness, and beseech Thee, grant that we may daily be found walking in sincere repentance, and there be joy in Heaven over every sinner that repenteth; for Thy Name's sake, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!