

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 5:20-26
July 19th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

You Will by No Means Get Out of There

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 confess that we are poor, wretched sinners, and that there is no good in us, our hearts, flesh and blood being so corrupted by sin, that we never in this life can be without sinful lust and concupiscence; therefore we beseech Thee, dear Father, forgive us these sins, and let Thy Holy Spirit so cleanse our hearts that we may desire and love Thy Word, abide by it, and thus by Thy grace be forever saved; 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.

Our Lord + Jesus Christ in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew says that unless your righteousness *exceeds* that of the scribes and the Pharisees you will by no means enter into Heaven. This is just another way to say that no man is going to be saved on account of his righteousness. The scribes and the Pharisees were considered to be the epitome of righteousness among the Jews. They were the model by which law-abiding citizens used as an example for how one should act according to the Law of God. Our Lord + Jesus states that even their righteousness is not enough. A person's righteousness needed to *exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

No one living is righteous before the Triune Lord God. All their good works are as dirty filthy rags in the sight of the Lord God. If a person depends upon the righteousness of their good works, it will not be enough to merit them eternal life in Heaven. Even the scribes and Pharisees with all their outward good works that impressed the Jews, were not worthy enough of Heaven on account of their good works. This is what the Jews thought that as long as they kept the Ten Commandments they would be saved; they would inherit eternal life. Such is the philosophy of modern man. How many people today believe that as long as a person is not a "really bad person" that that person will go to Heaven? This is a false notion. It is a lie of the devil and the world and our sinful flesh which wants to diminish the requirements of the Law of God. Our flesh wants to make the Law of God something that we can do to merit righteousness. Our sinful flesh cannot merit Heaven by our works and merits. Our righteousness pales in comparison to the requirements of the Law of God.

In the Old Testament Lesson, we heard the Ten Commandments from the Second Book of Moses, commonly called Exodus. If we were to take the Commandments at the baseness of their words, we could believe that we could keep the Commandments. I do not know any of us who have murdered anyone. Or committed thievery or armed robbery. And so if we just take the Commandments at their literal words, it is easy for someone to think that we keep them, just as the Jews at the time of

our Lord + Jesus did; just as the scribes and Pharisees thought they were doing.

This is why our Lord + Jesus goes on to say, “You have heard that it was said to those of old.” What He means by this is that ever since the Commandments were given, the Jews have interpreted them wrongly. There were certainly teachers along the way, the Prophets of old, who tried to teach the Jews what the requirements of the Law actually were, but they failed to listen and to learn. Just as it is with many people today who fail to listen to the Word of God and learn and believe in what the Law requires of us; it requires perfect obedience, something we cannot achieve. Therefore, this is why this Gospel reading comes every year for us in the Church’s year. We are instructed by our Lord + Jesus every year on what the Law requires of us. Our Lord + Jesus explains the requirements of the Law in a more plain sense to us.

This is for our benefit, just as it was for the benefit of the Jews during our Lord’s time. It is in our very nature to cling to our good works, just as it was for the Jews. They, like us, believed that if they were basically a good person, they would merit eternal life in Heaven. Our Lord + Jesus rescues them and us from this false notion—this false teaching. Keeping the Law of God requires not just the outward observe of the Law, but also requires the inward observe of the Law in our mind and spirit.

“Do not murder” means not just to take the physical life of someone, but it means also not to even be angry at anyone without cause. “Without cause” does not mean what most people want it to mean, that if I believe I am just in my angry—if I have a just cause in my mind—then it is okay for me to be angry with my neighbor. This is not what “without cause” means. It means those who have the position and vocation to be angry with their neighbor. Such as government leaders—the President, the Governor of these states, our legislature and all our judges and magistrates—have the just cause to be angry with, and punish, those who break the laws of our city, state and country. Parents have the just cause to be angry with their children when they miss behave. It is their job as parents to discipline unruly children. The same is true of all pastors and deacons—the ministers of the church—who justly condemn all those who are outward and manifest sinners, and exclude them from the Christian congregation.

In all of these cases the person who has the just right to be angry is not actually angry at the person, but at the sinful actions that they do. The magistrate is angry at the murder and theft, not at the murderer and thief. The parent is angry at the child’s misbehavior, not at the child. The pastor is angry at the openly manifest impenitence and sin, not the person who committing the sin. So, even in these cases were a person has just cause for being angry, they are not angry at the person, but at their sins—at their breaking of the Law of God.

But for all others, who do not possess the vocation and office to show anger at sin, they sin when they show anger at anyone. Even when that anger is kept only in the bosom of their heart. This is what our Lord + Jesus is getting at with the first example; someone who calls someone “Raca.” Calling someone “Raca” is the same as calling them “empty-headed.” This is usually done in the heart and mind, in our thoughts. It is even wrong to be angry with someone in our thoughts. It is murder to think ill will and evil thoughts toward our neighbors—our fellowman. Even if we have not actively killed someone in deed, we still merit the eternal wrath and displeasure of heavenly Father, if we have only thought hateful thoughts toward our fellowman.

Our Lord in His explanation of the Fifth Commandment then moves from our sinful thoughts which accuse us of breaking the Law of God to our sinful words. When we call someone, “You fool!” We are in danger of Hell’s fires. Again, this applies to those who do not have the office and calling to call someone a fool. For, our Lord + Jesus Himself calls people “foolish and slow to learn.” The Old Testament scriptures proclaim a person is a fool who says in their heart, “There is no God.” This again is directed at the sin that dwells within them, and not at the person alone. They are fools because they

have no faith, and have no need for the Triune Lord God. They are truly foolish who believe such nonsense.

What we see here in this pericope for today is that our Lord + Jesus explains the Fifth Commandment to show us how we sin in thought, word and deed. We think hateful thoughts towards our neighbors, which leads to hateful words towards our neighbors, which leads to anger fully grown that takes the physical life of our neighbor. Anger if not dealt with, will grow from hatred into murder—into killing someone. This is not something that we can achieve on our own. We cannot get rid of the anger that dwells within us, because sin inheres in our nature, even after our Holy Baptism. The Old Adam still rears his ugly head every day of our lives. If we are to remain in our anger, we are in danger of incurring the eternal wrath of our heavenly Father, and He will deliver us to the eternal prison, out of which we will never be able to get out of.

Therefore, what are we to do? How are we to get rid of anger? It is only through the Lord + Jesus. He is the One Who teaches us love for our fellowman. Through the Holy Ghost working through the means of grace—the preaching of the Word of God and the Blessed Sacraments—faith in our Lord's works and merits is created in us. We are taught to cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ's works and merits; to His righteousness. It is only in His righteousness that we have salvation. It is only in what He has done for us by His perfect fulfilling of the Law of God; by His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross that we can find righteousness.

In other words, when we sin—when we get angry—we must bury our anger and sin in the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ. The cross is the means by which the heavenly Father poured out all of His wrath upon the unrighteousness of mankind. Our wrath and sin were consumed on the tree of the holy cross by the wrath of the heavenly Father. Therefore, we must bury our sins in the cross of our Lord + Jesus. The same cross into which we were baptized in the waters of Holy Baptism. In remembering the cross, we are remembering our Holy Baptism, and we are therefore remembering that all of our sins and transgressions were drowned in those waters, and crucified on the tree of the holy cross.

Unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we will by no means enter into eternal life. Our righteousness—our keeping of the Law of God—can never achieve this for we sin daily and much in thoughts, words and deeds. Therefore, our righteousness is to be found only in the righteousness that our Lord + Jesus clothes us with in Holy Baptism, on account of His works and merits. We are clothed with His righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism. We bear His righteousness. We are clothed with the Christ and His works. Therefore, our heavenly Father sees only the works of His Son, our Lord, + Jesus when He looks at us.

Therefore, my dear friends, when we sin—when we become angry—remember that we are not saved by our righteousness, but we are eternally saved through the love that our Lord + Jesus bestows upon us by taking all of our anger into Himself on the tree of the holy cross, and He drowns the Old Adam in us through the waters of Holy Baptism, so that we can rise as new creations before Him. We are saved only through His righteousness, which far above exceeds the righteousness of scribes and the Pharisees. Indeed, His righteousness far exceeds any man's righteousness. Only through Him are we saved. Thanks be to the Triune Lord God for rescuing us from our sinful thoughts, words and deeds through the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus Christ. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord God, enter not into judgment with us, who have not from the heart kept Thy Commandments, but regard the precious merit of Thy dear Son, and let us ever be partakers of His righteousness. Enable us also by Thy Holy Spirit to walk in Thy fear, true faith, and holiness of living, and to beware of pride and security, that we may not be cast into everlasting prison,

but enter into Thine eternal Kingdom; through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee 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!