

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 7:15-23
August 2nd, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Beware of False Prophets

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 most heartily thank Thee that Thou hast caused us to come to the knowledge of Thy Word. We pray Thee: graciously keep us steadfast in this knowledge unto death, that we may obtain eternal life; send us now and ever pious pastors, who faithfully preach Thy Word, without offense or false doctrine, and grant them long life. Defend us from all false teachings, and frustrate Thou the counsels of all such as pervert Thy Word, who come to us in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly ravening wolves, that Thy true Church may evermore be established among us, and be defended and preserved from such false teachers; through 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 declares to us today to "Beware of false prophets." This can be confusing for some people, because there are many groups of Christians who accuse other groups of Christians of being false prophets. Who is to say who is right? How do we determine whether someone is a false prophet? How do we tell the right and true teaching of the Lord + Jesus Christ from those who would pervert or destroy it? How do we know that we possess the truth and belong to the One, True Christian Church on Earth? The answer, my dear friends, is found in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, specifically the last verse of the pericope. Our Lord + Jesus tells us in this Gospel how to determine whether a prophet is false or true. A false prophet is shown by his fruits. In the last verse of the Gospel reading our Lord says that a false prophet practices "lawlessness."

In other words, a false prophet is someone who wants to do away with the Law of God. The blessed Apostle St. Paul in his epistle to the Church at Rome in today's Epistle reading explains this further. Now that we are baptized into the Christ, and the Holy Ghost dwells within us; now that we have drowned the Old Adam and live before the Lord + Jesus as new creations, we no longer live according to the flesh. We now live according to the spirit. We live our lives according to the Law of God. At least we seek to live our lives according to the Ten Commandments. We desire to live holy lives. Even though we sin daily and much, we still strive to live our lives according to the Law of God.

A false prophet would have us live a life contrary to the Law of God; to indulge the whims of our sinful flesh. We see this in our society all the time. There are many so-called Christian church bodies that declare openly that such and such an act clearly contrary to the Law of God is no sin.

Homosexuality, abortion, fornication, gambling, divorce without a biblical cause, and the like, are all praised in our society, and encouraged by the false prophets of these false churches. If the false prophets are not openly advocating these things, then they distort repentance and forgiveness. They distort the love of God so that they claim that the Lord God will not get angry at anything they do. The Lord God will pass over your sin, because He is a forgiving God, so you can do whatever you want and it will be okay with the Lord God.

This is clearly contrary to what we learn when we study the Ten Commandments. The Triune Lord God will not hold him guiltless who breaks His Law. He threatens to punish all those who transgress His Law, visiting the iniquity of those who hate Him and break His Commandments to the third and fourth generation. For this reason, we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to His Law and His Commandments. The Triune Lord God desires that we obey His Commandments, even if we are not able to do that perfectly.

The fact that we cannot live our lives perfectly according to the Ten Commandments is why it is so important that the Law of God is not diminished among us. For when these false prophets distort the Law of God and do away with the wrath of God, what is really at stake is the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ. For if the Law does not matter. If we can be holy people in and of ourselves, what use do we have for a Christ? What use do we have for a Savior, if we can save ourselves? What use is the perfect fulfilling of the Law of God by our Lord + Jesus Christ, if we can do that ourselves without Him? We have no use for Him. This is why false prophets that do away with the Law of God, also take away from us our Savior + Jesus Christ. His works and merits merit us absolutely nothing. If the Law is destroyed, so is the Gospel.

This is why our Lord + Jesus tells these false prophets to depart from Him; that He never knew them, for they never knew Him, either. They do not know what it is like to be a poor, miserable sinner, who desires to live a life pleasing to the Lord God and is unable to do so. They do not know what it is like to be a slave to sin; to desire to be a slave to righteousness. They do not know what it means to desire to produce good fruit, but only produce bad fruit, on account of our manifold transgressions every single day. They do not know what it is like to cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits; His sacrifice of His very own life on the tree of the holy cross for us poor, miserable sinners.

They care more about some stupid thing called “social justice” than the only true justice that comes from the Lord God’s wrath being poured out upon the Only and Beloved Son of the heavenly Father on the tree of the cross. We find justice—we find justification with our Triune Lord God—through the faith that is created in us by the Holy Ghost, Who works through the means of grace to open our eyes and ears of faith to hear the promises that are found in the works and merits of the Christ—our Lord + Jesus.

False prophets lead us away from our Lord + Jesus into ourselves and our works; they lead us away from the working of the Christ into our doing and striving. The true prophet gives us nothing but our Lord + Jesus. When we have our Lord + Jesus we no longer desire to live a life in servitude to sin; we no longer desire to be slaves to sin. Nor do we desire to produce the bad fruit of living our lives to please the whims and desires of our sinful flesh, spurred on by the world and its ruler the devil. Having been filled by the Holy Ghost with faith, we desire to be a slave to righteousness, and to produce good fruit.

As we sang in the Introit, “We have thought on Your lovingkindness, in the midst of Your temple.” No longer slaves to sin, and full of bad fruit, we cling to our Lord + Jesus—to His lovingkindness—which He showed by coming down from Heaven to take upon Himself our flesh so that He might fulfill the Law of God perfectly for us, and suffer and die in our place on the tree of the holy cross. His lovingkindness is revealed in His works and merits on our behalf. Having been filled with faith by the

Holy Ghost, we cling to His lovingkindness. For we daily sin much, and even though we desire to live a perfect life, we cannot. Therefore, we rejoice at the works and merits of our Savior + Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear friends, beware of false prophets who would take the Lord + Jesus away from you, by teaching you that it is okay to live an unholy life; that the Lord God does not get angry with your sin; that the Law of God does not matter. For these false prophets are workers of lawlessness who never knew the Lord + Jesus Christ. Cling instead, my dear friends, to those prophets and preachers who would point out to you your sins and transgressions, for they do not do it to shame you or bring you into despair, but they do it to save your lives; they do it so that you might inherit an eternal home in Heaven. Listen to the true prophets of the Lord + Jesus, for they will lead you into the eternal Kingdom promised you on account of what the Lord + Jesus has done for you. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast commanded us to pray that Thou wouldest send forth laborers into Thy harvest: of Thine infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Thy Word, and put Thy saving Gospel in their hearts and on their lips, that they may truly fulfil Thy command, and preach nothing contrary to Thy holy Word, that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted, and strengthened by Thy heavenly Word, may do those things which are well-pleasing to Thee, and profitable to us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!