

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 9:1-8
October 18th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Be of Good Cheer

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 Mighty and Everlasting God, Who by Thy Son + Jesus Christ didst mercifully help the palsied man both in body and soul: We beseech Thee, for the sake of Thy great mercy: Be gracious also unto us; forgive us all our sins, and so govern us by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not ourselves be the cause of sickness and other afflictions; keep us in Thy fear, and strengthen us by Thy grace that we may escape temporal and eternal wrath and punishment, through Thy Son, + Jesus Christ, our Lord, 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.

The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew tells us today that a paralytic was brought to our Lord + Jesus Christ. The Evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke tell us that our while our Lord + Jesus was preaching the crowds were too great for them to bring this man in through the door, so they went up on the roof and let him down through the roof, as can be seen on the cover art of the bulletin. One thing that all these narratives from the various Gospel readings have in common is that no request is made to our Lord + Jesus. If there was a request, it is not recorded for us in any of the Gospel readings from St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke. What this tells us is that the need of this man is obvious. He is a paralytic, and needs to be healed of his paralysis.

His friends who brought him to the Lord + Jesus show their compassion for him. They could not bear to see their loved one suffer. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew when describing the faith that prompted this action, uses the word “their.” It was “their” faith that brought this paralytic man to the Lord + Jesus. Now, there is debate about who all is included in this word “their.” Does the word “their” include the man who is brought to our Lord + Jesus, or does “their” refer only to the men who let him down through the roof to our Lord + Jesus? It is certainly an interesting question, but one that cannot be answered with any certainty. The reason is this is not the point that St. Matthew is trying to make. The Apostle and Evangelist is instead directing us to another set of words. The Gospel says that our Lord + Jesus “saw their faith.”

This is clear because in spite of the crowds, they find a way to bring this man before the Lord + Jesus. They went up on the roof and let him down through the roof to be in front of the Lord + Jesus. The faith of these men is clear. What they wanted to happen is clear, even though no words are recorded for us. So then, what does our Lord do when He “saw their faith?” He says to the man, “Son, be of good cheer; Your sins are forgiven you.” Forgiveness? Where is there any mention of a need for forgiveness? It is clear that the need of this man is to be healed of his physical malady. It is clear that this man’s greatest need is his paralysis. Or is it? Our Lord + Jesus “saw their faith” and knew that what this man’s actual greatest need was to receive forgiveness for his sins. His spiritual paralysis caused

by sins was a greater harm to this man than the physical paralysis that infected his body. He needed to have his sins forgiven more than he needed to be healed of his paralysis.

The same is true of us. Our sin is our greatest malady. No matter what physical ailments may plague us in this life and body, our greatest plague is the plague of sin that infects us all. If we were all inflicted with severe cases of Covid-19 and were on the point of death, our greatest need would still be the forgiveness of sins. Without forgiveness of our sins, healing from some earthly disease is not going to matter one bit. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus in his compassion for this man, and for us, pronounces the absolution of his sins. "Son, be of good cheer; Your sins are forgiven you." He says the same thing to us whenever we in contrition—sorrow over our sins—confess our sins to Him through the pastor. In confessing our sins in contrition, we believe—have faith—that our sins are forgiven on account of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us by perfectly fulfilling the Law and suffering our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. When the called ministers of Christ do among us, by His divine command, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, it is just as valid and certain as if the Lord + Jesus Christ had dealt with us Himself.

The called ministers of Christ, through the absolution of sins, proclaim to us the same words that our dear Lord + Jesus proclaimed to this palsied man, "Son, be of good cheer; Your sins are forgiven you." We, like the paralytic man, have exactly what these words offer: forgiveness of sins.

Remember that our Lord + Jesus "saw their faith." He saw that they believed that He could heal this man of his greatest malady. That great malady was sin. He received that which he truly needed. Our Lord + Jesus deals with us in the same way whenever we come into this holy house to receive His precious gifts found in Word and Sacrament. The means of grace supply us with forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation through the work of the Holy Ghost through these means. The Lord + Jesus sees our faith, that we cling to Him for life and salvation, and He forgives us our sins on account of what He has done for us in His works and merits.

Therefore, we have forgiveness whenever we make the sign of the holy cross and remember that our Triune Lord God has placed His Name upon us and washed away all of our sins. We have forgiveness whenever the pastor pronounces to us the absolution, that is, the forgiveness of sins, when we kneel before him and confess our sins to him, both privately and corporately. We also have the forgiveness of sins whenever we come before our Lord + Jesus and kneel at His altar and receive from Him, by the hand of the pastor, His very Body and Blood given in bread and wine. We receive all these things here in this place, that is why it is important for us as the Body of Christ—the Church—to join together in this place and receive the forgiveness of sins that He desires to give all those who have faith in Him. He sees our faith and proclaims to us "Be of good cheer; Your sins are forgiven you."

Our Lord + Jesus sees our faith, and He saw the faith of the men bringing the paralytic to Him. But this is not the only thing that our Lord + Jesus saw that day. The English translates the word as "knowing." When the scribes said within themselves, that "this Man blasphemes!" our Lord + Jesus (our English says) knew their thoughts. However, the Greek word literally means, "saw." When the Lord + Jesus "saw their thoughts." What the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is doing here is pointing out that our Lord + Jesus sees everything. He saw the faith of the paralytic and his friends. He sees the thoughts of the scribes who accuse Him of blaspheming—that is, claiming something for Himself only the Lord God has authority to do.

When our Lord + Jesus saw their thoughts, He also heals them of their paralysis of thought. Which is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven you" or, "Arise and walk." It is the latter, right. It is so much easier to tell a paralytic to arise and walk, then to tell someone that their sins are forgiven, right? No, of course not! It is certainly easier to say to someone, "Your sins are forgiven you." But the problem that the scribes have with our Lord's words to the paralytic is He is claiming an authority for Himself that

only the Lord God has authority to do. Only the Triune Lord God can forgive the sins of mankind. Our Lord + Jesus then does something wonderful. He shows that all authority in Heaven and on Earth have been given to Him, so that when the called ministers of Christ, having gone out into all the nations by the command of the Lord + Jesus, and they have baptized all nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, it is just as valid and certain as if the Lord God had said it Himself. It is just as valid and certain as if the Lord + Jesus Who is both God and man declared that our sins are forgiven.

He shows that He has this authority to forgive sins on Earth, and He shows that the authority that He gives to the Church to do the same thing, by saying to this paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

In faith, this man did just that. In faith, we also are healed of our spiritual paralysis when we come to this holy house and receive the gifts of our Lord + Jesus, and believe that through our Holy Baptism, through the Absolution spoken by the pastor, and through our Lord's very Body and Blood given in bread and wine that we have exactly what He proclaims to us: we have the forgiveness of sins. For our Lord + Jesus sees our faith, and He sees our thoughts, and He knows that we come to Him in contrition and faith to receive from Him the healing of our souls. In His authority He gladly says to us, "Son, be of good cheer; Your sins are forgiven you." For He has fulfilled the Law perfectly which we break daily for us, and has suffered and died on the tree of the holy cross so that we might no longer suffer under the paralysis of our sins, but that we might be free to arise, take up our cross, and go into the house of the Lord and dwell with Him in righteousness and holiness forever and ever. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, by Thy Son, hast promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life: we beseech Thee so to rule and govern our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek help from Him, and by a true and lively faith in Thy Word obtain the same; 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!