

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 25:31-46
November 15th, 2020
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When the Son of Man Comes

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 Almighty, Eternal and Merciful God, Who by Thy beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, hast established the Kingdom of Grace for us, that we might believe the forgiveness of our sins, in Thy holy Church on Earth, since Thou art a God Who hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: We beseech Thee, graciously forgive us all our sins, through the same, Thy Son Jesus Christ, 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.

We sang in the Introit, “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” This is what the coming of our Lord + Jesus Christ means for us poor, miserable sinners: all of our sorrow and sighing will flee away. This wonderful news is why the Church in her liturgical year spends much time at the end of her year, and at the beginning of her year directing our attention and focus on the coming of the Lord + Jesus Christ. You may have noticed that the sermon titles for the last few Sundays and today (and next week) all mention the Lord’s coming in some fashion. When the Son of Man comes, He will come with all of the angels of Heaven and sit on His glorious throne.

He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, like a shepherd separates the sheep from the young goats. The sheep He will deal with first. He will place them on His right hand. The goats He will place off to the left to be dealt with later. Now because we are such poor, miserable sinners; because we know how truly filled with sin we are, this parable of the Last Day can cause much anxiety. Am I worthy enough to be placed with the sheep? Even the works that the Lord + Jesus commends to the sheep we have a hard time finding to have done. How can we be standing on the right when our actions merit only our standing on the left?

Have we fed our Lord or given Him drink? Have we found Him as a stranger and taken Him in? Have we clothed our Lord when we found Him to be naked? Have we visited Him when He was sick? Or ministered to Him when He was in prison? If we are honest with our works and merits then we have to admit like the sheep in the parable that we have done none of these things. How then can we sing of the joys of Heaven? How can we sing that we have an eternal home in Heaven if we are such poor, miserable sinners? Surely the coming of the Son of Man—our Lord + Jesus Christ—is a cause for such sinners and you and me to tremble and fear that day of wrath; that dreadful and mournful day.

Indeed, it will be a day of wrath, dread and mourning for the goats on the left, for they only think of themselves as righteous. They do not see the corruption of their souls. The unrighteous goes about his life thinking himself to be righteous. Just look at the response of the goats to the Lord’s sentence.

They are in utter shock that they are not considered righteous; that they are cursed and are sentenced to the eternal fires of Hell that were prepared for the devil and his angels. This is how the unbeliever thinks; this is how the world thinks and believes. They believe that if they are basically good people, then they are deserving of Heaven. Just consider what is said of someone who dies in this world. Most funerals are eulogies of how great the person who died was. People love to talk about how great of a person he was. What is sadly missing in non-Christian funerals, and even more sadly, even in some so-called Christian funerals, is the proclamation that we are not saved by our works, but we are saved—“ransomed” is how the Introit put it—by the works and merits of the Christ, our Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord + Jesus bought us from sin, death and the power of the devil by His very own Blood. He offered up His life as a ransom for our life. He paid the penalty of our sins by His death. He gave us life through His death. He credited to our account the perfect fulfilling of the Law of God which He accomplished. He gave us His works and took our punishment. This is why the sheep, who only see the wrong that they did, are called “blessed of My Father.” It is why the sheep inherit the Kingdom that was prepared for them before the foundation of the world. The sheep are saved—they inherit a Kingdom—because they cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ.

This is why it is wrong to praise the works of men. This is what the world loves to do, because they refuse to cling in faith to something outside of themselves. For them to do so is a sign of weakness. Do you not know that being a Christian means that you are weak-willed, and cannot handle life without something outside of yourself? This is the way the world thinks. The sad thing is the only thing that will save the world is the one thing they shun like the plague. They trust too much in themselves. They relish too much in their good works. They are too busy considering how good of a person they are to see the corruption that exists in them, which we are all unable to get rid of by our working and striving.

The world wants to strip us and the rest of the world of our only hope of salvation. This is why the Lord + Jesus calls them “cursed.” They do not want salvation for themselves, and they do not want it for anyone else. This is also why our Lord + Jesus proclaims the sentence that they have not done any of the works required for Him. They desire to leave our Lord + Jesus hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick and in prison. Because they do this to themselves and the rest of the world, they do it to the Lord + Jesus. Because they take refuse to believe on the Lord + Jesus and criticize those who do cling to Him in faith, they leave our Lord + Jesus destitute and hungry. For those who cling to Him in faith are part of His Body; we are the Body of Christ. If it is done to the Church, it is done to us, and it is done to our Lord + Jesus.

This, however, is also why we need not fear that wrathful, dreadful and mournful day. For those of us who cling to our Lord + Jesus in faith, receive all the benefits of His Body that are given to Him through His Bride, the Church. Through His Bride the Church—who is united as one with her Bridegroom our Lord + Jesus—we are fed with the Word of God and fed with His Body in bread. We are given to drink of our Lord’s Blood in wine. We are clothed with His righteousness in the waters of Holy Baptism. We are placed into a family—the family of the Lord God—where we are no longer strangers. We are healed of our sickness of sin through the proclamation that our sins are forgiven when we confess our sins in the Absolution. And we are ministered to in this prison of the world through the blessed means of grace—the Word and the Sacraments—until our Lord + Jesus comes with all the angels and sits on His throne of glory and separates us from the goats and places us on His right-hand side.

We who are in the Church—the ransomed of the Lord + Jesus by His shed Blood on the tree of the holy cross—feed all the least of the brothers of our Lord whenever we faithfully carry out the ministry of preaching the Gospel in all its purity and administering the Blessed Sacraments according to Christ’s command and institution. When we remain faithful to the task that our Lord + Jesus has given to His Bride the Church, we are ministering to the least of His brothers. We are feeding them with His Word,

and quenching their thirst for righteousness by giving them the works of the Christ. We are clothing them with our Lord's righteousness, so that they do not remain naked in their own works. We are making them a part of the citizenship of Heaven, so that they are no longer strangers. We are curing them of their sickness of sin, and freeing them from the prison bonds in which the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh desire to keep them so that they will end up with the same fate as them—in the everlasting fires prepared for the devil and his angels.

For the goats—the unrighteous unbelievers—the Last Day will be a day of dread, wrath and mourning. There will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth, because they refuse to cling in faith to the One Who paid their ransom with His own life.

For the sheep—all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus Christ—the Last Day will be a day joy and singing. Everlasting joy and gladness will be our inheritance. All sorrow and sighing will flee away. No longer will we bear the pain and sorrow of this sin-soaked life. No longer will we be tormented with temptation, guilt and shame. We will enter into our eternal home and joy with all the other saints who have gone before us, and all the angel host of Heaven, and sing and praise our Lord God Almighty for all eternity. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and He will give us to eat of the tree of life and give us to drink of the river of life, and we will be clothed with the garments of a new and heavenly body. We will no longer be sojourners and strangers in a land and world that hates us, but we will be citizens in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. There we will no longer face any kind of sickness or disease, nor will be trapped in the prison in which sin, death and the devil desires to keep us trapped. Now let us all thank our Lord God, for He has ransomed us and promises to come to take us to our eternal home in Zion. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who wilt come again in majesty to judge the quick and the dead, and call forth all who sleep in the graves, either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation: we beseech Thee to be gracious unto us, and to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Thee, and, having been found acceptable in Thy sight, may on the Last Day be raised up to life everlasting, inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and give Thee glory and praise, 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!