

The Festival of St. Matthias, Apostle and Martyr
St. Matthew 11:25-30
February 24th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Will Give You Rest

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 Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Today we celebrate the Festival of St. Matthias, Apostle and Martyr. Everything we know about St. Matthias from holy Scripture is recorded for us in today's reading from the Epistle. St. Luke in his Acts of the Apostles records that St. Peter had stood up in the presence of the entire Church—a group numbering at that time one hundred and twenty souls—and proclaimed that the seat that had been occupied by the traitor, Judas Iscariot, needed to be filled by one in their midst. The requirement put forth to determine who could serve as a witness to the resurrection of our Lord + Jesus Christ was that the man had to have been with them since the baptism of the Lord + Jesus by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River. That same man also needed to have remained with them throughout the entire ministry of the Lord + Jesus, even up until His death and resurrection.

The time frame given by St. Luke for these events is after the Ascension of our Lord + Jesus Christ, but before the gifting of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost. Therefore, this man also would have had to have remained with the rest of the Apostles from the Lord's resurrection until His ascension to the right hand of God the Father. Two names are put forth: Joseph, called Barsabas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. In order to determine who was the Lord's choice the Apostles did two things: they prayed to the Lord God to make His choice known, and then they cast lots. The lot fell upon Matthias, and from that day he was numbered among the Apostles. No more mention in holy Scripture is made of him.

There is, however, mention of him in the various Church traditions. In the Eastern Church, it is said of St. Matthias that he preached and planted the faith in Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, and that he lived mainly in port city of Issus. Cappadocia is in the region of modern-day Turkey. The Western Church, however, differs in opinion about where St. Matthias preached and planted the Church. It is believed that he began his preaching in Judea and then eventually ended up in Colchis, what is modern-day Georgia, (the country, not the state) along the eastern shore of the Black Sea. There he died by being stoned to death. There is another tradition that says that he was stoned to death in Jerusalem and then was beheaded. There is also much debate about where he was buried. This is why St. Matthias is almost the forgotten Apostle.

Even after he is chosen because he had remained with the Lord + Jesus throughout his ministry. It seems that the Lord chooses another one to replace the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, when He appears

to the persecutor of the Church, Saul of Tarsus—who would become known more commonly as Paul. Whatever his actual history is this much is true: he was a disciple of the Lord + Jesus. So much of a disciple that he remained with the Lord the entire time of His earthly ministry—all three years of it. We can also be fairly confident that having been chosen St. Matthias did go into the world to preach the good news of salvation through the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. We know this because he is not just called an Apostle, but also a Martyr. He died for preaching the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is certain that he obtained that which the Lord + Jesus promises all those who are faithful in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew: eternal rest. Our Lord + Jesus promises this to all who remain with Him; who cling to Him and His works and merits in faith. Our Lord promises this to us as we see from the antiphon to the Introit, which records the words of the Evangelist St. John, which we sang, “And you also will bear witness of Me, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” Certainly, these words refer to St. Matthias who was chosen because he had remained with the Lord from the beginning of His ministry after His baptism by St. John the Baptist, but they also apply to us; to all those who cling steadfastly to the Lord + Jesus in faith.

We continue to cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus, because He continues to preach into our ears the salvation that is found only in Him. He preaches into our ears what He has done for us: fulfilled the Law of God perfectly and suffered and died on our behalf on the tree of the holy cross. He also continues to preach into our ears what He continues to do for us. He gives us His precious Word and Sacraments to keep us in the one, true faith. The same tools that St. Matthias and all the Apostles had when they went into all the world to proclaim the good news of salvation found in the Lord + Jesus alone. We still have these great gifts to keep us in the true faith, so that we might continue to remain clinging to our Lord + Jesus. Even as we have from when our Lord first called us through Holy Baptism. Just as we continue to cling to Him today as He feeds us with His very own Body and Blood given to us in bread and wine. So too, through His Word and Sacraments He will continue to draw us to Him, so that we may remain with Him until He gives us eternal rest in our eternal home in Heaven.

This is what our Lord Jesus desires for us and all mankind that we would come to Him and find rest in Him from all of our hard labor placed upon us by sin within us and in this world. This is why He sends to us His ministers to use His means of grace to draw us unto Him. Just as He used St. Matthias, the Apostle and Martyr to use the means of grace to bring those who lived in what we now call the Middle East the good news of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. He was an eyewitness of the resurrection of our Lord. Therefore, He was an eyewitness that the resurrection of the dead and the promise of a life everlasting was indeed a true thing for all those who come to the Lord + Jesus and take upon themselves His yoke. His yoke is the tree of the holy cross upon which He won salvation for you and me and all mankind. In His yoke—in His cross—we find eternal rest, for upon it He took away all our sins. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!