

Holy Tuesday  
St. John 12:24-43  
March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Unless a Grain of Wheat Dies

*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.

The Lord God Almighty fed the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years with manna; with bread from Heaven. Now in the week before His suffering, crucifixion and death the Living Bread from Heaven is among His people. Our Lord + Jesus is the Living Bread come down from Heaven. He is the Bread of Life of which if a person eats, he will never go hungry. We eat of the Bread of Heaven—we feast on the Body of our Lord when we receive the host—when we come to this altar and kneel and receive the meal that grants us life and salvation; that grants us forgiveness of all of our sins. When we eat this meal, we can never go hungry. Our Lord + Jesus told us to hunger and thirst for righteousness; to seek after the righteousness that is found only in Him. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood in bread and wine we will never hunger and thirst for righteousness for He feeds and gives us an eternal drink that gives us the righteousness of faith.

The Lord God fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness for forty years. We, as the people of the Lord God by faith, also feed upon heavenly manna—the Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus—in this wilderness of the world throughout all of the days of our pilgrimage here on Earth. Our Lord feeds and sustains us with righteousness in this world filled with sin and death. He gives us the means by which we can grow and produce an abundant fruit of faith in Him and Him alone for our salvation. We cling to Him in faith. We cling to His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross, for by it He has paid the penalty of all of our sins. By His sacrifice our sins are atoned for, and by our clinging to this sacrifice in the faith that the Holy Ghost gifts to us through the means of grace, we are made right before God. We are made righteous and justified through the faith gifted to us. This is what the Living Bread from Heaven has come down to this Earth to do for us and for all of mankind.

Since our Lord + Jesus is the Living Bread come down from Heaven, and since we feast upon this Life-giving Bread at this altar, it is no wonder that our Lord + Jesus compares Himself in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John to a grain of wheat. In order for a grain of wheat to produce life—produce even more wheat—it must go into the ground and die. One grain of wheat produces hundredfold grains of wheat. It must die in order for more wheat to be produced. In order for there to be seed for the sower and bread for the eater, the grain of wheat must die.

Our Lord + Jesus offers up His life as a ransom for us on the tree of the holy cross in order that He might be that grain of wheat that goes into the ground and dies. He suffers and dies on behalf of

the whole world, so that all those who believe on Him might be given the Living Bread to eat for the strengthening of their faith through the work of the Holy Ghost. He is buried so that all those who cling to Him in faith, even though they die, will be raised again on the Last Day and given new and glorious bodies. Our Lord + Jesus suffers and dies so that many new grains of wheat may be produced.

This is the purpose for which He came to this hour. By His death the heavenly Father is glorified. The Name of the heavenly Father—indeed, the Name of the whole Triune Lord God—is glorified because this is the means by which He had planned before the foundation of the world to save and redeem mankind from all their sins, and from the power of devil. The salvation of the world is accomplished in the death of the Lord + Jesus. By His death the Lord God is glorified, for the plan that He made from before the foundation of the world has come to fruition; it has been fulfilled.

When the Voice came from Heaven and declared that His Name had been glorified and will be glorified again, the people who heard it did not fully understand it. Indeed, this Voice is reminiscent of the Voice that thundered from Mount Sinai when the Law of God was given to the Israelites. At that time the people knew Who was speaking and it filled them with so much fear that they asked Moses to ask the Lord God to send someone who could speak on behalf of the Lord God. Indeed, Moses was that man until the time of His death. The Lord God had promised a Prophet would come Who would speak on behalf of the people of Israel.

Instead of fear the people who hear the Voice from Heaven are confused. This shows just how much the people of Israel had become separated from the Lord God. They no longer recognized Who spoke or what the Voice meant. This is why our Lord + Jesus tells those listening that the Voice was not for His sake but for theirs. It signified that the time of redemption was now at hand. Now was the time of the judgment of this world. All of the world's sins would be judged on the tree of the holy cross. The Lord God heavenly Father would pour out His wrath towards the sinfulness of mankind upon His One and Only Beloved Son—our Lord + Jesus. The judgment that we deserved would be meted out upon the Only One Who was innocent of transgression. The hour of our judgment was at hand. And the Innocent One would receive the penalty of our sins in His flesh as He poured out His Blood for us.

This grain of wheat suffered and died and was buried, so that He might draw all men to Himself. He was lifted up on the tree of the cross, so that all those who cling to Him in faith might be drawn to Him and receive from Him the Bread of Heaven. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood in bread and wine, we are remembering and proclaiming that this death—this judgment toward all of mankind's sins—has paid for our sins and given us forgiveness for all of our sins. By this Bread of Life—by the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus on the tree of the holy cross—we are fed eternally with the manna that came down from Heaven. We are fed from the grain of wheat that died and went into the ground to produce much more grain—all those who cling to Him in faith and are made members of the Body of Christ.

Our Lord + Jesus tells those who are listening to Him today that He has come to do all these wonderful things for them; to give them forgiveness, life and salvation. But, even though the Lord + Jesus tells them about the salvation planned for them that He will accomplish, and even though He had performed many signs and wonders, they still did not believe Him, or receive Him. They rejected Him as the Messiah, for they did not want a Messiah that hangs upon a tree. They did not want a Messiah that would be lifted up on a cross. This is the only Messiah—the only Savior—that they were going to get. This is the only Savior which the world receives, and like the Jews in the Gospel reading much of the world rejects a Messiah that accomplishes all of their salvation for them.

Everywhere in the world there are people who try to earn their salvation by their own doing and striving—by their own works and merits. They falsely believe that their works are good enough to earn salvation. They do not see the corruption that dwells within them, which they cannot shake off; they

cannot do enough good works to appease the anger of the Lord God, for their good works are useless apart from faith in the works of the Christ. When we cling to our good works for salvation; when we think they can merit some favor or grace from the Lord God, we are sorely mistaken. We have excluded Christ and His perfect works on our behalf. Only He can atone for our sins, for only He is perfect and sinless. Only He is both God and man. Only His sacrifice glorifies the Name of the heavenly Father, for it is only through His death that the plan put in place before the foundation of the world is fulfilled.

We do not need to earn our salvation. It is given to us freely on account of the faith created by the Holy Ghost. We need only receive His gifts; gifts that He freely gives to us at this altar. He gives us to eat of His Body and Blood in bread and wine, so that we might have life eternally. He gives us to eat of the Bread of Life so that we may never go hungry. By this meal we receive the bread of righteousness which strengthens our faith to trust and cling onto Him and His works and merits. Therefore, my dear friends, let us eat of the heavenly manna—our Lord + Jesus—and let us give thanks that our Lord + Jesus has gone into the earth dead to produce much grain in abundance. He has produced the grain that makes up the holy catholic Church, of which we are a part. Let us give Him thanks and praise eternally for His grace and mercy toward us. 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!*