

Midweek Lenten Vespers 3  
St. John 8:42-51  
March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## I Tell the Truth

*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.

We are all liars. We are liars so much that when someone calls us a liar, we are prone to deny it. If you do not think you are a liar, just call to remembrance how many times you have said out loud, or in your heart, when trouble comes into your life, “I do not deserve this.” The truth is that not only do we deserve the trouble that comes upon us, but on account of our manifold sins and transgressions—our constant breaking of the Law of God—we deserve so much more trouble and pain. As we confess in the Confiteor during the Divine Service, we justly deserve our Lord God’s temporal and eternal punishment.

It really is no wonder that we are all liars, for we are of our father the devil. When we were created by the Triune Lord God we had as our Father the Almighty God and Creator of the world. He Who made us was our Father. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they no longer had the Triune Lord God as their Father, but they now had as their father the devil. This has been the case with all of their children, even down to us. On account of sin dwelling within us, we have forsaken our original Father and have allowed the devil to become our father. Whenever we sin, we just prove that the devil is our father. Whenever we lie, especially when we lie about our sins and our sinfulness, we prove that the father of lies is our father; that we are his children who also lie.

The writer of tonight’s Gospel reading, the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, in his First Epistle, the Third chapter, echoes the words of our Lord + Jesus from the Gospel reading for tonight. He says in that chapter that everyone who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. In the same Epistle, in the First chapter, St. John also says the words that are probably more familiar to us: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Therefore, when we are dishonest with ourselves about our sin and our sinfulness, we are all liars. We are children of our father the devil.

Is this not what our Lord + Jesus says to the ones in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John? One of the disadvantages of a pericopal system—when we have short readings that have a beginning and an end—is that the readings have to be cut off somewhere. (That is what pericope literally means, it means to “cut off.” The readings are cut off at a certain part to make a short concise reading.) In the case of tonight’s Gospel reading the part that is cut off would explain to whom the Lord + Jesus is speaking. St. John writes that the people to whom our Lord is speaking is “those

Jews who believed Him.” They believed Him because of what He spoke. He spoke of the Son of Man being lifted up; of His crucifixion and death. On account of His words, they believed in Him.

Our Lord + Jesus then tells them to abide in His words, and if they do, they will know the truth and the truth will set them free; free from being under the bondage of the devil. They would no longer be sons of the devil, but would be once again sons of the heavenly Father. Just as St. John said in his Epistle about those who confess their sins: The Lord God forgives their sin and cleanses them from unrighteousness. Through believing the Word of Christ—believing that He is the Messiah come to atone for the sins of the whole world—we are cleansed of our unrighteousness. We are no longer liars, but are now in the truth. Therefore, as St. John says in his First Epistle, the Third chapter, he who is born of God (through the work of the Holy Ghost by the means of grace creating and preserving faith in us) no longer has sin. Through faith—through hearing and believing the Word of the Christ—we now have the Lord God as our Father. We are no longer children of the devil. We are now firmly in the truth. We are now no longer liars.

Then why does our Lord + Jesus accuse those Jews who believe Him of having the devil as a father? Well, when our Lord + Jesus told them to abide in Him and His Word, they wanted to claim as their father Abraham. In other words, because of their ancestral lineage they did not need the Lord + Jesus, or His Word. They had Abraham as an ancestor, they had no other need of any other kind of father. Our Lord + Jesus is pointing out that if they sin, they are not sons of Abraham. Abraham had great faith—faith in the promised Christ—in the promised Lord + Jesus. If they place their faith and trust in the same thing that Abraham did—in the promised Christ—they too would be sons of Abraham, and therefore sons of the heavenly Father.

But their works betrayed them. Their sinfulness showed that they were all liars; that they were not sons of Abraham. If they would do the works of Abraham, that is, believe on the promised Messiah, they would be Abraham’s children. Instead, they sought to kill the Lord + Jesus. In other words, they went from believing His words, until He spoke further. They did not want to abide in His words; they did not want to be His disciples. They chose to remain slaves to sin and Satan.

Our Lord + Jesus preached to them to rescue them from their error. His words are for us, too. He reminds us that when we sin, when we lie about our sins and sinfulness, we are denying the Lord God to be our Father and allowing the devil, the father of lies, to be our father. When we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, we are of our father the devil. We are once again all liars. Sadly, when we do this we choose as our father a murderer. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, just as he was a liar from the beginning. He is a murderer from the beginning because of his jealousy of mankind he murdered Adam and Eve by deceiving them into eating from the tree which the Lord God said they were not to eat.

The devil continues to seek to murder all of Adam and Eve’s children. He seeks to murder us through his lies and temptations. He does not want us to listen to the Word of God. He wants us to neglect its use. He does not want us to daily and often sharpen the greatest weapon we have against him and his lies—the Word of God. When we go for long periods of time—more than a few hours—without being in the Word of God; without clinging in faith to the words of the Christ, we have allowed the devil to triumph over us. We have believed his lies. We have chosen him as our father, and denied our original Father, Who created us. We all become liars. For like the Jews who believed our Lord + Jesus, we think that our souls are not in spiritual danger for we have enough power in ourselves to defend off the assaults of the devil.

In this we fail every time. When we believe our own lies, the lies that deceive us into thinking that we can get by without constantly being in the Word of God, we put ourselves in eternal spiritual danger. This is why we need to cling most fervently to the Lord + Jesus and His Word. In Him is life. In

Him is truth. If we confess our sins to Him, we are in the truth, for we repent of all of our lies that we tell ourselves to make us seem better than we truly are. We truly are worthy of the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure on account of our manifold sins and transgressions, but our Lord + Jesus desires us to be free from that. Freedom from the Lord God's wrath is given to all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His Word.

In His Word, we hear of all of the great things that He has done for us. The True Word of God—the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us—comes down to be the Truth in a world of lies. He brings truth to this world filled with the lies and deceptions of the devil. He comes to be truth for us, who have the devil for our father. He comes to free us from being sons of the devil, to being sons of the heavenly Father. For He speaks the truth. He does not lie. All those who are in Him by faith, are like Him. They also are filled with truth, and cannot lie. Indeed, on account of the Christ dwelling in them by faith, they are no longer filled with sin, for the Lord + Jesus' works and merits cover over the multitude of our sins.

When we sin, we are all liars. But when we confess our sins, expose and uncover our sins to the Lord God, truth now abides within us. We are now no longer liars, but we are filled with the truth. Therefore, my dear friends, as we reflect upon the Ten Commandments during this season of Lent, let us readily confess our sins to God our Father, so that the truth may abide in us. For a heart that is true is heartily sorry for its sins, and sincerely repents of them. A heart that desires to be true says, "For all this I am sorry and ask forgiveness. I mean to do better." And the Pastor pronounces the Absolution into our ears, "In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ I forgive thee thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We then add our affirmation that the Pastor does tell the truth of our Lord's Absolution when we say, "Amen." By this word we confess that we are no longer liars and sons of the devil, but that the Truth dwells within us, and we tell the truth that we are now children of our heavenly Father, on account of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. He has been lifted up and atoned for all of our sins on the tree of the holy cross. 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!*