

Judica (*Passion Sunday*)

St. John 8:46-59

March 21st, 2021

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Shall Never Taste Death

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Most Merciful God, Who hast given Thy Son to die for our sins, and to obtain forgiveness and redemption for us through His own Blood: let the merit of this spotless sacrifice, we beseech Thee, purge our consciences from dead works, that we may serve Thee, the living God, and receive the promise of eternal inheritance in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

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

On the surface the question of the Jews in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John seems like a legitimate question. "How can you say that the one keeping Your Word shall never taste death?" We see death all the time. The Jews saw death all the time. Abraham was dead. We even have recorded in Genesis, the Twenty-Fifth chapter, the place and time of his death and burial. He was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which he purchased from the son of Heth, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael at the ripe old age of one hundred seventy-five. It is the same place where his wife Sarah was also buried.

The prophets are also all dead. Moses died at the age of one hundred twenty years old. Although his grave is in a secret place, we are told at the end of the Fifth Book of Moses, that he was buried by the Lord God in the land of Moab across from Beth Peor. Indeed, his successor, Joshua, died at one hundred ten years old and was buried at Timnath Serah. All of the judges of Israel we have a record of their death. All the kings of Israel, we have a record of their death. All of the prophets we have a record of their death. Some of them were even martyred on account of their preaching. In fact, of all the people recorded in the holy Scriptures, there are only two that did not taste death: Enoch and Elijah. Enoch walked with the Lord God; and he was not, for the Lord God took him. Elijah was taken up into Heaven in a fiery chariot, as his successor, Elisha, looked on. We also see death among us, too. There is no one we personally know who has gone into Heaven alive.

Therefore, the question of the Jews is a legitimate question on the surface. "How can you say that the one keeping Your Word shall never taste death when we see death all around us?" Our Lord + Jesus, however, is not talking about physical death. He is talking about spiritual death. Those who keep His Word, that is, those who believe on Him and do not call Him a liar, like the Jews in the Gospel reading have been doing, shall never taste the eternal death of Hell. What our Lord is showing us is the resurrection. We may physically die, but our soul will live on in Heaven. Even more so, the Lord God will grant to us a new and glorious resurrected body which we will possess for all of eternity. This is the promise that our Lord + Jesus wanted the Jews to hear and believe.

As was said a couple of weeks ago, when we had the verses preceding this text in one of our

Midweek Lenten Vespers, the people that our Lord + Jesus is speaking to are the “Jews who believed Him.” The Jews had believed His Word, until He kept speaking, and then He said things that they did not believe. The same was true after the feeding of the five thousand. They wanted to make Him their king immediately because they believed Him to be the Prophet sent from the Lord God. He was that Prophet, but He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. When the Lord + Jesus told them that the Kingdom was made up of people who ate His flesh; the flesh of the Bread of Life. He was the living Bread come down from Heaven, and those who desired to be apart of His Kingdom must He of His flesh; eat the Living Bread come down from Heaven. This, of course, was too much for many of them, so that they stopped following Him.

The same weeding of disciples takes place in this chapter. Our Lord + Jesus says things in which many of them cannot abide. The problem in both chapters is that the hearers fail to see that our Lord + Jesus is not speaking in literal terms, but He is speaking in spiritual terms. He is relaying heavenly things, not earthly things. From an earthly perspective, we see people die all the time. However, from an heavenly and spiritual perspective, all those who cling in faith to the Word of the Christ, never taste death, for they are taken from this valley of tears to their eternal home in Heaven. We see death and the grave; we see the body in the casket and the casket being lowered into the grave, and the grave being covered.

The reality is that the soul that once resided in that body now dwells in Heaven. It is before the throne of our Lord and Savior—the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the whole world—singing and praising the Lord forever. On the Last Day, that soul will be given a new and glorious body in the Day of the resurrection of the dead. We who cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus and His works and merits shall never taste death—eternal death in Hell—for when our Lord calls us out of this flesh, we will dwell with Him and all the angels and all the saints in Heaven who have gone there before us. We will be with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Enoch, Elijah and all the faithful judges, kings, and prophets of Israel who are there now waiting for us to join them. We will be with all the New Testament saints as well, with St. Peter and St. Paul, with St. James the Elder, with All the Saints, and with St. Michael and All the Angels in Heaven.

We shall never taste death, because of One Who did taste death for us. Our Lord + Jesus perfectly kept the Law of God and then offered up His perfect life as a ransom for us on the tree of the holy cross. He was crucified, dead and buried for us. He then descended into Hell to show all those who refused to believe on Him that He truly was worthy of all honor, because He did conquer death and Hell. Those who did not keep His Word are sentenced to eternal death in Hell. They dishonored Him, and therefore they dishonored the One Who sent Him—the heavenly Father. He tasted the death that we deserved, in order that we might be rescued from eternal death and damnation. He then rose again from the dead, to give a witness to what our life will be like. We too will rise again from the dead, even as He did.

Before Abraham was, our Lord + Jesus was the I AM—He was the Yahweh. He is the Lord God sent by the Lord God to win salvation for us poor, miserable sinners. He is the eternal Living Lord God Who offers us His Body and Blood in bread and wine as a meal for all those who cling to Him in faith and expect to receive from Him the promise of forgiveness of their sins on account of His sacrifice for us. We who cling to Him in faith and receive from Him His Body and Blood in bread and wine are made members of His Kingdom. We who eat this meal shall never taste death, for our Lord + Jesus has tasted death for us, and given us eternal life and salvation. He died and offered His Body and Blood as a meal to feed all those who keep His Word until He calls them to their eternal home in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to cling to our Lord + Jesus and His works and merits. Let us abide in His Word—His promises that declare that all those who cling to Him and His death on the cross for the sins of the whole world will be given a place in His Kingdom. For this is what it means

to “keep” His Word: it means to abide by faith in His Word and promises.

He declared to the Jews that He was the Living Bread Which came down from Heaven to give life to all who ate of this Bread. They rejected Him for that. He declared to the Jews that all those who keep His Word shall never taste death. They rejected Him for that. He declares the same thing to us today. All those who cling to Him in faith and who eat of the Living Bread sent down from Heaven, shall never taste death. They shall never go hungry. For He will feed us with Living Bread for all eternity. For this He is to be eternally honored and praised. For in Him and Him alone is salvation. Let us therefore keep His Word and receive from Him His eternal and wonderful gifts. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who through Thy Son, true God and our Redeemer, didst say: “If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death,” we beseech Thee, bestow upon us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may give due honor to Thy Son, keep His Word, trust in it, comfort ourselves therewith in the hour of departure, and through death enter into everlasting life; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, 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!