

Oculi
St. Luke 11:14-28
March 7th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Blessed Are Those Who Hear the Word of God

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who hast sent Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh, that He might overcome the devil, and defend us poor sinners against the adversary: We give thanks unto Thee for Thy merciful help, and we beseech Thee to attend us with Thy grace in all temptations, to preserve us from carnal security, and by Thy Holy Spirit to keep us in Thy Word and Thy fear, that unto the end we may be delivered from the enemy, and obtain eternal salvation, through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, 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.

Today is all about our eyes; what we see and what we are to avoid seeing. This began in the Introit where we sang, “My eyes are ever toward the Lord.” We also heard this theme in the Tract before the reading of the Gospel when we sang, “Unto You I lift up my eyes.” According to these words of holy Scripture, what are our eyes supposed to be doing? Our eyes are to be fixed on our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. All eyes are to be on Him. Now, this does not simply mean that our eyes are to be physically looking at our Lord + Jesus. Certainly, we should look upon the crucifix—our Lord + Jesus hanging dead on the tree of the cross for us poor, miserable sinners. And we should also look at our Lord + Jesus depicted in art, as He is on our walls, where much of His life is shown us through art. We should reflect upon the physical image of our Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us.

However, when we talk about having our eyes fixed on the Lord + Jesus we are talking about this in a spiritual sense. The eyes of our faith—our trust in the works and merits of the Christ—should be firmly fixed upon the object of our salvation. Our eyes of faith should look upon our Lord + Jesus and believe that the promises that He won for us, and all mankind, on the tree of the holy cross, truly are given to us poor, miserable sinners. We cling in faith to His works and merits. We fix our eyes on the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us. This is why this day is called Oculi Sunday. It is all about our eyes. Oculi means “eyes.” It is where we get English words, like “ocular.” So, when we say that our eyes are ever toward the Lord, and when we say that we are lifting up our eyes to the Lord, we are simply singing and proclaiming that it is our Lord + Jesus in Whom we trust.

He is our help and salvation. He is the One Who plucks our feet out of a net. He is the One Who has mercy upon us. On account of our sins, we deserve His eternal wrath and displeasure, but on account of His mercy, He does not treat us the way that we deserve to be treated. He instead rescues us and defends us from all our enemies. It is this truth that King David sang of in Psalm 18, the same Psalm that is recorded in our Lesson from 2 Samuel 22. He had an earthly enemy—King Saul—who

sought to kill him, but King David in his Psalm is not just singing about rescue from King Saul. He is singing about all the enemies from whom our Lord + Jesus rescues us. He rescues us from the very powers of darkness and Hell.

In the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, we meet our Lord + Jesus casting out a demon. Just like the poor child in this past Wednesday's reading was plagued by a deaf and mute demon, so too was this person from the Gospel reading. Unlike the reading from this past Wednesday, not much detail is given; only that our Lord + Jesus commanded the demon to come out. It did and the person who was formally mute and unable to speak, began to speak. His lips were opened to sing the praise of the Lord + Jesus.

This did not sit well with some of them. They reasoned in themselves that the reason that our Lord was able to cast out demons must be because He is in league with them. Our Lord points out how illogical this is. What advantage would be to the devil's kingdom if he allowed his kingdom to be destroyed from the inside? A strong man guards his stuff. He does not allow his house to be broken into if he can help it. The strong man—the devil—does not want his kingdom destroyed and his possessions taken. This is why he is fully armored and fully armed, because he does not want the Lord + Jesus to destroy his kingdom.

But our Lord + Jesus is the Stronger Man. He overpowers the devil, and takes away all of his armor and weapons in which he has trusted. The Lord + Jesus ransacks the kingdom of the devil by His perfect obedience to the Law of God, and by offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world on the tree of the holy cross. He sheds His own blood to win the victory over the devil and his demons. He then divides the spoils with us, all those who fix their eyes of faith on the Lord + Jesus; all those who cling to His promises of forgiveness, life and salvation through Him. Our Lord + Jesus has destroyed the devil's kingdom and given it to us, so that we can live with our Lord + Jesus forever in His Kingdom in Heaven.

This is the promise to which we cling in faith. This is the promise upon which we fix our eyes. This is why our eyes are ever toward the Lord and why we lift up our eyes to Him, for through Him, and only Him, we have life and salvation. Without Him we are driven back into the devil's kingdom. Without Him and His promises proclaimed to us in His holy Word, the demon takes with him seven spirits more evil than himself and makes our condition seven times worse than it was before. This is why we keep our eyes fixed upon what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. Why we always remember that no matter how strong the devil is, the Lord + Jesus is the Stronger Man, and He casts out the devil by the Finger of God.

The Finger of God is the Holy Ghost. He drives away the devil and his demons from us by the means of grace. Through preaching of the holy Gospel and the administration of the Blessed Sacraments the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost—casts out the demons from us. It is through the Word of God that we are rescued from our enemies. This is why our Lord + Jesus proclaims into our ears today that the truly blessed ones of this world are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The Word of God proclaims to us that our eyes of faith should be firmly fixed upon our Lord + Jesus and His works and merits on our behalf to bring us forgiveness, life and salvation.

The Mother of God—the Blessed Virgin Mary—is certainly to be praised for giving birth to the Savior of the world. Without her feeding our Lord + Jesus with the milk from her breasts, He would not have been able to grow up and cast out demons. For this she is to be praised above all woman. But we do not turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or any other saint, for our help and deliverance. Our eyes are to be forever toward the Lord + Jesus. Our faith clings solely to Him. He is the One standing before us desiring to hand out to us mercy and grace. He is the One Who thoroughly defeated our enemies, and gives us a place in His eternal Kingdom. He is the One Who has plucked our feet out of the snare

into which the devil has entrapped us. No other person, or saint, has or can do this for us. Do not place your trust in the wrong armor and defense.

Our armor and defense are the Word of God and our Lord + Jesus which it proclaims. We have a sure and certain defense against all of our enemies in Him and Him alone. Therefore, my dear friends, let us firmly fix our eyes of faith on the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us. When our enemies—the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh—torment us. When we are distressed and in the midst of affliction and pain, remember that our help is found in the Lord + Jesus. He has already conquered our enemies. They have been defeated by Him. The Stronger Man has bound the strong man of the devil, and ransacked his kingdom and given to us the spoils. Our enemies have fallen and perished before Him. For as we are able to see with our eyes in the art and crucifixes that hang in our sanctuary, our Lord + Jesus has offered His life as a ransom for the whole world, so that all those who cling to Him in faith are justified before the heavenly Father.

Let us give our Lord + Jesus all thanks and praise, and let us continue to fix our eyes upon our Lord and Savior, for He has rescued us from all our enemies and continues to guard and keep us in the one, true faith by His Finger—the Holy Ghost. He uses the Word of God to open up our ears to hear of the good things that He has done for us, and He looses our tongues to sing. We praise Him by singing that He is our rock and fortress. He is our deliverer from our enemy. On account of this we look to Him with our eyes of faith, and place our trust in Him alone. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who hast sent Thy Son into the world to destroy the works of the devil, we beseech Thee, curb the tyranny of the wicked foe, and protect us against him, keep us from security, and graciously preserve us by Thy Holy Spirit in all temptations, that, being ever defended from the Evil One, we may until our end walk in Thy fear according to Thy Word, and finally obtain everlasting salvation; through 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!