

Midweek Lenten Vespers 5  
St. Matthew 10:32-42  
March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Him I Will Also Confess Before My Father

*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 Church is at war. Where there is war, there can be no peace. There can be no peace until the enemies are subdued and defeated. Indeed, our enemies—the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh—need to be utterly destroyed before there can be any hope of peace. We are under constant attack from our enemies from the time of our birth. We are continuously bombarded with temptations. We are continually surrounded by opportunities to sin. One of those sins is addressed by our dear Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. The sin is to think that one can be a Christian if faith only remains in the mind and heart. Faith in the heart in confessed with the mouth, as St. Paul writes to the Church of Rome in the tenth chapter, “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The mouth naturally confesses what the heart believes. Now, there can certainly be deceivers. Ones who confess with the mouth, but do not truly believe in the heart. They make themselves about to be liars, for they do not tell the truth of what is truly in their heart. But there cannot be those believe in the heart and do not confess with the mouth. If they do not confess with their mouth, they do not really believe in their heart, for the mouth naturally confesses what the heart believes. The heart of faith readily admits the war that exists in this world with the spiritual powers of darkness, and also readily admits the war that exists within itself, as the pull of sin and temptation is revealed through its thoughts and desires. The heart’s sinful thoughts and desires are expressed in the words that it speaks, and the deeds that it drives the person it owns to do.

It is for this reason, that we are thoroughly racked with sin, and under constant attack from the war with the devil, the world and our flesh, that our dear Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has come into the world. He has come to cast a sword. He has come to do battle with our enemies. He has not come to make peace with our enemies. He has come to utterly destroy them. Even as He commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites on account of their rebellion against the Lord God. Because our Lord + Jesus has come to do battle with the powers of darkness, enemies are made between the two sides: those who confess Him before men, and those who do not confess Him before men. The heart of faith desires to speak the truth. On account of this desire to confess the truth about the Lord + Jesus, and because what is in the heart is confessed with the lips, this naturally makes enemies with those who are opposed to the truth.

Our Lord + Jesus tells us that sin has so corrupted this world that the enemies we will face will exist within our own households. There will be members of our own households who want to have nothing to do with the truth. They will want nothing to do with the Lord + Jesus. The war that we face in this world with the powers of darkness will take place in our own homes among those we love. It is on account of this reality that our Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven to us. He knows how divided a family can be on account of the Word of God. Scripture teaches us that our Lord's own brother, St. James of Jerusalem, did not believe that the Lord + Jesus was the Messiah until after our Lord's resurrection from the dead; when our Lord met with His brother James after His crucifixion, death and burial.

Our Lord + Jesus is well familiar with the war that plagues us all of our lives. He is well aware that the sword of the truth of the Word of God will create enemies—those who do not any part of the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits on our behalf. This is also why He gives a stern warning in our Gospel reading for today. The daily battle that we face with the powers of darkness can take a toll on us, especially when we do not see any hope for peace coming any time soon; when all we see is the continual battle coming at us from all sides. It can be quite wearisome. When we are battle-weary it is easy for us to fall into the temptation to give up the fight. This has led some to the point our Lord talks about in the Gospel reading: denying Him before men.

And in case we are deceived into thinking that we will be immune to such temptations, consider the actions of one of the Apostles, St. Peter, whose denying of the Lord + Jesus three times before the rooster crows we will hear about several times in the coming Holy Week. If the person who is arguably the leader of the Apostles can deny the Lord before men three times, we ourselves are not immune from such actions. Judas Iscariot also denied Him before men—the chief priests and Pharisees—so that in exchange for thirty pieces of silver he betrayed the Lord + Jesus into the hands of sinful men. Both these two followers of our Lord + Jesus denied the Lord before men.

The difference between the two is what each man did when he realized his sin. Judas Iscariot went and hanged himself. St. Peter went out and wept bitterly. Judas Iscariot hung himself in impenitence, forsaking the forgiveness found in the Lord + Jesus. St. Peter wept in faith and clung to the hope of forgiveness through the Lord + Jesus. Indeed, he was forgiven by the Lord + Jesus after the Lord's resurrection when our Lord told him to feed and tend to His lambs and sheep. The enemies of the Church—the powers of darkness—destroyed one follower of our Lord + Jesus, and almost destroyed another, as they sought to sift St. Peter like wheat.

Our Lord + Jesus prayed on behalf of St. Peter that he would remain faithful. He prays on our behalf to the heavenly Father, too. More than that, He came with His sword to make war with the enemies of the Church and defeat them by offering up His perfect and innocent life as a ransom for all of mankind on the tree of the holy cross. He thoroughly and utterly destroyed sin, death and the devil by His death on the cross. He was a whole burnt offering that utterly destroyed sin and the penalty of sin. He then gave to all those who believe on Him the spoils of war. He won the battle and He shares the victory with all those who confess Him in faith before men; all those who believe in the heart and confess with the mouth that He is Lord and Savior of all mankind, and especially of them who believe and confess Him before men.

The spoils of war that He shares with us is the meal of the peace offering. The peace offering was an offering in which part of the offering was offered to the Lord God and the rest was shared with the priest and one offering the peace offering. It was a meal of communion with the Lord God; a meal that declared there was now peace between the Lord God and the one sharing in the peace offering. We have this peace offering when we come to this altar and receive our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine. When we commune at this altar we are confessing with our mouths before men that we are in agreement on the truth of the Word of God; that our Lord + Jesus offered up His life as a

ransom for us on the tree of the holy cross and has utterly defeated our enemies, and has given us the spoils of war—His Body and Blood—which offers to us forgiveness of our sins.

We share in the meal that declares that our Lord + Jesus is the Victor in the war with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Just as He forgave St. Peter who clung to Him in repentant faith for forgiveness, He grants all of us who cling to Him in repentant faith forgiveness for all the times we denied Him before men.

Our Lord + Jesus has come to cast a sword; to make war with our enemies. Our enemies do not like it one bit, for they know their defeat is assured. Therefore, they take every opportunity to do us harm in this life. Their aim is to drive us into despair and shame like they did to Judas Iscariot, so that we forsake our Lord + Jesus all together, and no longer look to Him for forgiveness for our sins, but instead deny our sinfulness to ourselves and to other men.

My dear friends, we are at war. The Church is at war. We are besieged on all sides at all times by our enemies. But we do not need to lose heart, for the Captain of the Lord's army—our Lord + Jesus, the Christ—has come to make war with our enemies; to cast a sword at them. He has thoroughly and utterly defeated our enemies by His works and merits—His perfect fulfilling of the Law of God and His suffering and death on our behalf—and He has given us spoils of His victory. Therefore, let us give Him thanks and praise at all time, confessing with our lips that which we believe in our hearts, that He is our Lord and Savior—the only Lord and Savior of all mankind. 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!*