

The Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 1:39-56
July 2nd, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When Elizabeth Heard the Greeting

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.

When our Lord + Jesus comes, the faithful respond in worship. When our Lord comes to us in the purity of His Word and when He comes to us in His Sacraments administered according to His institution, we respond in worship. We give Him all honor, praise and thanksgiving. Worship always begins with the Lord coming to us first. Worship is a response to our Lord's coming to us. Prayer is a form of worship. Prayer also requires our Lord coming to us first. In prayer, He comes to us by preaching His Word into our ears. Our prayers are a response to what He speaks to Him. We cannot respond to Him if He does not preach to us first. If we are not listening to Him and what He has to say to us, this leads to false prayer and false worship. For, mankind is all too eager to replace the Words of the Triune Lord God with their own false imaginations and inclinations.

We have gathered here today on this Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to worship our Lord. He has come to us by His Word and His Sacrament. This is evident in the Liturgy itself. The Liturgy is made up entirely of the Word of God. This entire time we have been hearing the Word of God preached into our ears. The Lord God's preaching does not just happen when the preacher enters the pulpit and expounds the holy Scriptures. The Word of God is preached into our ears from the beginning of the Service to the end when we leave and go out into the world with our Lord's words ringing in our ears.

The Sacraments are also constantly before us in the Liturgy. The very first thing we heard in the Liturgy was a reminder of our Holy Baptism. We were blessed with the Invocation of the Triune Lord God. We heard once again the Name that was placed upon us when the waters of Holy Baptism were placed upon us. Through those waters connected to the Word of God, our Lord God claimed us as His own child. We are His people. His people come to Him to hear His Word and give thanks and praise for the gifts that He bestows upon us. The gifts of forgiveness of sins, eternal life with Him, and rescue and salvation from our enemies of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. Whenever we hear the Divine Triune Name, we are once again reminded that we are His children, and He is our God. This Triune Name that we hear at the beginning is repeated throughout the Liturgy; whenever we hear our Lord being addressed in a threefold fashion, we are hearing about the Triune Lord God Who claimed us as His own.

Not only is Holy Baptism, the means by which we entered into a fellowship with our Lord God,

continually put before our eyes in the Liturgy, but the holy Supper which feeds and sustains us in the one, true faith is also placed before us. Every part of the Liturgy builds to that meal of our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of our sins. The holy Supper—our Lord's Supper—is the climax of the entire Liturgy. It is where we meet our Lord Who has come to us and share with Him, and with one another, a meal of communion and fellowship. He comes to us in this meal in a very real and personal way, and we worship Him by partaking of this meal; by receiving in our mouths that which He blesses us with for the benefit of our souls. Through this meal He creates and sustains in us faith and life through the work of the Holy Ghost.

In the Gospel reading for today, we are introduced to the Living God Who has come down from Heaven in the Second Person of the holy Trinity—our Lord + Jesus, the Christ—and now dwells bodily in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is why the Festival of the Visitation is a festival of the Christ, and not of the Virgin Mary. For, we are introduced through the historical narrative to the first time that we meet our Lord + Jesus in the flesh; the flesh of man which He has taken upon Himself in order to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil through His perfect obedience to the Law and will of the Lord God, and through His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross.

Today, on this Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth her relative our Lord + Jesus comes to be with us—His people. What is the response? When Elizabeth heard the greeting of the Virgin Mary the babe in her womb leaped with joy. A baby who is only six months old and still in the womb leaps for joy over the arrival of our Lord and Savior is only a day or so old in the womb. If that is not a testament to us that life begins at conception, then no argument will be sufficient for us; even as it is for some in this world. After St. John the Baptist leaps in Elizabeth's womb for joy at the arrival of the Lord and Savior + Jesus, His mother is filled with the Holy Ghost and proclaims that the Blessed Virgin Mary is blessed, because she bears in her womb the Savior of the world. The Virgin Mary will always be blessed among women, because she is the Theotokos—the bearer of the Lord God.

Not only does the baby in Elizabeth's womb leap for joy at the arrival of our Lord + Jesus in the flesh and in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, not only does Elizabeth become filled with the Holy Ghost and proclaim the Virgin Mary to be blessed of the Lord God, but the Virgin Mary also sings the praises of the Lord God. She sings the Magnificat for the first time. The song of the Church which proclaims that our Lord + Jesus does not consider the lowliness and poverty of those who humbly confess their sinfulness, and which proclaims that the haughty and prideful He turns away, is sung for the first time by the Blessed Virgin.

St. Luke the Evangelist records for us in the first chapter of his Gospel the first Church service. The Lord + Jesus has come to His people, and the people respond with praise and thanksgiving. They leap for joy. They are filled with the Holy Ghost through the presence of the Word of God among us, and proclaim how blessed they are that our Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven for all poor, miserable sinners. They sing about all the wonderful gifts our Lord + Jesus bestows upon them even though they are unworthy of them. The Lord + Jesus has come to forgive the sins of all those who humbly confess their sins, and cling to Him and His works in faith. This is true worship: our Lord + Jesus coming to His Bride, the Church, and giving her His wonderful gifts, and then His Bride, the Church, responds with thanks and praise that He is our One and Only Savior.

He is the One and Only Savior of the whole world. He came to this world to redeem the world from sin, death and the power of the devil. He came to perfectly obey and fulfill the Law of God which we are unable to do on account of our manifold sins and transgressions. He came to offer up His life as a ransom for ours. He came to pay the penalty of our sins by offering up His perfect and spotless and sinless life as a sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. He came to His people to suffer and die and be raised again on the third day for all of us poor, miserable sinners who cling in faith to Him

and trust that in Him we have forgiveness, life and salvation. He comes to us to redeem us. We worship Him by giving Him thanks for all that He has done for us, especially that He has won for us forgiveness from all of our sins.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us like St. John the Baptist, leap for joy on this festival day that our Lord + Jesus has come to us in His Word and Sacraments in order that He might preach into our ears all that He has done for us. Through these means of grace, He fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we can respond to His coming with songs of praise and adoration for all that He has, and continues to do, for us. Thanks be to the Lord God for all of His benefits 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!