

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Luke 18:9-14  
August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Myrtle Beach, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

God, Be Merciful to Me A Sinner!

*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 God, Who hast brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the glorious Prince of Salvation, with everlasting victory over Hell and the grave, grant unto us power, we beseech Thee, to rise with Him to newness of life that we may overcome the world with the victory of faith, and have part at last in the resurrection of the just; through the merits of this same risen Savior, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One 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.

Our Lord + Jesus speaks a parable today. The Evangelist St. Luke tells us that the parable was told for those who trusted in themselves and their own righteousness. When we see or hear the word trust—or the words believe or faith—we know that we are dealing with a First Commandment issue. For what does the First Commandment require? It requires that we fear, love and “trust” in the Lord God above all things. The Lord requires that we trust in Him; that we believe in Him; that we have faith in Him. Therefore, when we trust in anything other than the Lord God, our faith is directed toward the wrong thing. Martin Luther described faith as anything that we look to for comfort in times of trial and woe. When things are bad in our life, to where do we turn to find comfort? To often look to any other thing to solve our problem. When we have extinguished all other options, then we turn to our Lord God for comfort and strength.

The parable in today’s pericope from the Evangelist St. Luke is directed at those who have a distinct false god upon which they rely. At whom does the Evangelist say our Lord’s parable is directed? What is their false god? It is directed at those who trust in themselves; who trust in their own righteousness. This is the false god of much of the world. We are all prone to view our lives and our behaviors as being good. We do not like to look at ourselves as being failures, or bad people. This is why when the Law is preached to us, we cringe and bolster ourselves up against such accusations. We say, “Surely, this cannot be true! I am a good person. Look at all the good things that I do in my life, and for my family and neighbors.” We cling desperately to our false god of our own righteousness, because if we have to admit our own unrighteousness, then we have to admit that we have a false god.

This is especially true when we have made our false god ourselves. We have to give up ourselves and the props which we have built for ourselves in order for us to turn from the false god of ourselves. People who worship themselves and their own righteousness and works, have the hardest time giving up on their false worship. Our Lord + Jesus gives us the perfect example of someone who

trusts in himself in the parable for today. Notice the Pharisees “prayer,” if one can really call it a prayer, because he is not really asking for anything, he is just praising himself. As our Lord + Jesus says, “He prayed with himself.” In other words, he was just talking out loud to himself about his works, and how good of a person he was. He was not talking to the Lord God.

Notice, too, how he praises himself. He praises himself—that is, his false god of his own righteousness—by tearing down other people. This is how we are able to maintain trust in the false god of our own righteousness, because we constantly compare ourselves to other people. “Well, I am not as bad as that other person, or group of people, so I must not be that bad at all.” The Pharisee can claim righteousness in his own works because he is “not like other men.” How often have we said to ourselves, “Well, at least I am not like that person.”? The Pharisee does the same thing. He is not an extortionist, unjust, an adulterer, or even a tax collector. Then he lists the works that he does that prove his righteousness: fasting twice a week, and tithing of all of his possessions.

He still lacks one thing. Just like all of us who place our trust in our own righteousness, he has failed to see the one sin that he can never atone for; the one good work he can never fulfill. He has inherited original sin. This sin inheres in us—it clings to us like a burr on a dress—and will not ever let us go. We cannot do enough good works to appease the wrath of the Lord God over this sin that corrupts us to the core. No amount of not sinning will cover over the original sin—the sin of Adam. We cannot be justified by our own righteousness. Our false god of our own good works, will let us down. It can do no other thing, for our good works cannot appease the wrath of the Lord God.

Only the Lord + Jesus can atone for our sins. It is only through His perfect fulfilling of the Law of God; only through His righteousness can the works of the Law be fulfilled. It is only through His taking upon Himself our punishment on the tree of the holy cross, that our sins can be atoned for. This is why we need to daily live in our Holy Baptisms. For in our baptisms, we were drowned and buried with the Christ into His death and resurrection, so that just as he died and rose again from the dead, when we daily live in repentance, that is, when we daily confess our sins, and believe that the sacrifice of our Lord + Jesus atones for our sins, then we are declared righteous on account of our faith in that atonement. We put on our Lord’s righteousness. We are clothed with His righteousness.

When we daily live in our Holy Baptism, we are daily denying our false god of our own righteousness, and clinging to the One, True Lord and God, Whose works avail for our good, and Whose suffering and death paid for our sins. He is the only God we need. His righteousness is the only righteousness we need. His works done on our behalf are the only works to which we can cling. Daily drowning the Old Adam through the waters of Holy Baptism, daily cleanses us of all our unrighteousness and false gods and worship, for we look to the One, True God of our Lord + Jesus Christ and His works and merits.

The Pharisee wanted to praise himself for all the good that he did; for not being like other people. He wanted to cling to the false god which was himself. He trusted in himself, and was therefore not justified before the Lord God. The tax collector, on the other hand, knew his true condition. He was a lost and condemned creature. He was not worthy to look up to Heaven. He was just like we are. We are lost and condemned creatures in need of the Lord God’s grace and mercy. We are not worthy for to look up to Heaven on account of our manifold transgressions. We are indeed, as we confessed before, poor, miserable sinners.

This tax collector beat his breast in repentance. And that is a sign of repentance when we beat our breasts. It is an acknowledgment that our hearts are corrupted with sin; that our hearts are hearts of stone, which need to be broken up with the Law. The Holy Ghost uses the means of grace—the Word of God and the Sacraments—to turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, so that we may hear the good news that our salvation is not dependent upon our works and doings. It is not dependent upon

our righteousness. For there is One only Who is worthy of all praise. Only our Lord + Jesus, and His works and merits, can make us justified before the Lord God in Heaven. When we beat our breast in repentance, we are confessing that our righteousness avails for nothing, and that only the righteousness of the Christ can forgive us all of our sins. When we beat our breasts in repentance, like the tax collector in the parable from the Evangelist St. Luke's Gospel reading, we are confessing that we have no need of any other god, than the One, True God, Who has claimed us as His own in the waters of Holy Baptism.

The tax collector prays the perfect prayer. Prayer does not need to be filled with many words for it to be a good prayer. His prayer is simple and to the point. "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Mercy for sinners only comes from the Lord God. When we realize that we are worship a false god; when we realize that we are clinging to the false god of our own righteousness, then we can beat our breasts in repentance like this poor, miserable sinner of a tax collector, and say with him, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

The Lord God is merciful to sinners to confess their sins. They are justified before Him, for they deny the false god of their own righteousness; they no longer trust in themselves, but trust solely in the Lord God, Who promises to be merciful to all those who cling to Him in faith and look to Him for their righteousness. For our righteousness is not found within us. It is found in our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, alone. He has fulfilled all that was required of the Law, and paid our penalty on the tree of the holy cross, so that we can depart from this place in peace. For the Lord God is merciful to us poor, miserable sinners. He has come to us today, to share with us His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation, so that we may depart from this place—that we may go down from this place—justified before the Lord God in Heaven. Let us give Him thanks and praise forever and ever, world without end! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

O God, Who resisteth the proud, and givest grace to the humble, grant unto us true humility, after the likeness in which Thine only Son hath revealed it in Himself, that we may never be lifted up and provoke Thy wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of the gifts of Thy grace; through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*