

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 9:1-8
October 10th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Arose and Departed

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 holy and righteous God, who hast not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, and given us our allotted season of grace: we beseech Thee, because the days are evil, and through the weakness of our mortal nature we are easily misled, impart to us the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may redeem the time, accept Christ in His Word as our only Savior, walk soberly and circumspectly in this present world, give Thee praise and thanks always, and obtain at last the crown of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, 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.

The readings that we use every Sunday and on other Feast and Festival days for the Epistles and Gospels comprise what is known as a pericopal system. A pericope is a short reading. It literally means to “cut off.” This reading from the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is “cut off” from the rest of the book. This is why the readings begin at a certain point and end at a certain point. They are pericopes—they are “cut off” from the rest of the book to give us a precise reading upon which to focus. This is good so that we can focus on one particular narrative each time we meet for worship.

There is a problem with having a pericopal system, however. The problem is that since the readings have to begin and end somewhere, we do not always get to see the full context. Take today’s pericope from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew as an example. St. Matthew begins the pericope by saying that our Lord + Jesus “got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.” This raises the question, or at least it should raise the question in our minds, “Where was He when He was on the other side of His own city?” What took place when He was on the other side of the lake? What was He doing on the other side? The eighth chapter of St. Matthew describes our Lord + Jesus casting out a herd of demons from two poor demon-possessed individuals. The many demons were permitted to enter into a herd of swine, and then the swine promptly ran off and drowned themselves in the sea.

The ones who were keeping the swine ran off into the nearest city, and the whole town in the region of the Gergesenes came out to witness these events. What did the town do? Were they glad that our Lord + Jesus had cast out these demons? No, they begged Him to leave their town. They did not want anything to do with this Man + Jesus. Therefore, having been rejected by the men in the region of the Gergesenes, our Lord + Jesus got back into the boat which He had taken to get there—the same sea upon which He had calmed the windy and stormy seas just prior to casting out the demons—and went back to His own city.

Now as He is in His own home, we are told in another Gospel, that a crowd is gathered around Him to hear Him preach. The crowd is so great that the men who have brought the paralytic to be healed by the Lord + Jesus, have to open up the roof and let him down that way. And this is why I was pointing out the importance of a pericopal system. For when we look at this pericope in context, we see to contrasting events. In the first instance, when our Lord + Jesus was on the other side of the sea, the people in the region of the Gergesenes did not want anything to do with our Lord + Jesus. They begged Him to leave. Here in His own city, He is surrounded by a thick crowd begging to hear His preaching. Furthermore, there is a paralytic whose friends care about him so deeply that they also beg the Lord + Jesus to heal this paralytic man. Their begging is in the form of opening up the roof and letting the man down through the roof to be in front of the Lord + Jesus.

In the region of the Gergesenes our Lord + Jesus beheld the unbelief of the people of that region. Here in His own city, He beholds great faith. This is pointed out to us by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. He writes "When + Jesus saw their faith." After our Lord encounters unbelief, He is met by men of great faith. Now, we could debate all day until the cows come home to whom the word "their" is referring. Is it referring to the friends of the paralytic? To all of them including the paralytic? Such questions are good for getting the brain juices flowing, but they detract from the point of the pericope. For, the point of the pericope is how our Lord + Jesus responds to this faith. He responds by telling the paralytic that his sins are forgiven.

One may get the impression at first that this is a dodge. The friends clearly did not open up a hole in the roof and let their friend down so that his sins could be forgiven. There was a temple for that purpose. A burnt sacrifice at the temple was meant to serve as atonement for the remission of sins. This is why there were daily sacrifices performed by the priests, morning and evening. It was because the temple was the place to go for forgiveness of one's sins that the belief that sins could be forgiven only at the temple came into being. This is why the scribes standing around said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" Only the Lord God could forgive sins. By telling this paralytic man that his sins were forgiven, the Lord + Jesus was making Himself out to be the Lord God in the eyes of the scribes.

So now our Lord + Jesus has created two problems with the crowd observing these events: He has not done what the friends of the paralytic clearly wanted, that is, heal him of his paralysis, and He has made Himself out to be the Lord God by forgiving this man's sins.

Our Lord + Jesus Who is the Great Physician of soul and body, knows the real need of this paralytic. His real need is the healing of his soul. He needs forgiveness. It was widely and popularly believed by the Jews that injury and illness was a result of some sin that the person had committed. It is quite probable that this man too felt the guilt of some unknown sin that was the cause of his paralysis. We are not given any detail on his history, so we cannot know how long he was a paralytic. Was it some accident? Was he born this way? Was it some illness that left him this way? Or even just old age getting the best of his body as is often the case? We do not know. But our Lord + Jesus sees in this man's heart the pain and guilt of sin, and He offers the better of the two healings to this man first. He relieves the pain of this man's soul.

Our soul often feels this pain and anguish when we are racked with guilt over our sin. This is why our Lord + Jesus has placed into our midst men who can pronounce to us that our sins are absolved. In fact, this is something that all Christians can now do for each other. We can offer one another the forgiveness of our sins. This is something that we should do for each other often. The words of forgiveness and absolution should be continuously on our lips. This is why I say to you all often, "Peace be with you." And you have learned to speak those words yourselves, as well. Learn further that those words are declarations of forgiveness. When we offer peace to one another, we are offering forgiveness of sins to one another. Truly the Lord God Almighty should be praised and glorified for giving to mankind the gift of offering to one another the forgiveness of sins.

This brings us to the second thing our Lord + Jesus did wrong in the sight of the crowds: make Himself to be the Lord God by declaring this man's sins forgiven. Well, clearly our Lord + Jesus in the Lord God. He is both man and God. He has two natures in One Person. So, as the Man God He can forgive the sins of this paralytic if He desires. But, our Lord + Jesus is teaching the crowds there that they do not have to go to the temple to find forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just found in the burnt offerings offered in the temple daily morning and evening. Forgiveness is found in the Son of Man. It is found in Him. Forgiveness of sins is found in the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus Christ. We have our forgiveness through and in Him. We are forgiven and justified when we cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us.

The men who brought the paralytic had great faith. They believed that the Lord + Jesus could heal this paralytic man. Our Lord + Jesus has set everyone up gathered there that day to witness that our Lord + Jesus does not just heal bodies, but He heals souls. And when the scribes accuse Him of blasphemy within themselves, He takes it as an opportunity to show them that there is forgiveness through the Son of Man. He does this by healing the paralytic of his paralysis. He says to him, "Arise and walk." And what does the paralytic do? He arose and departed. This healing was proof that there is forgiveness in the Son of Man. This healing is our proof that there is forgiveness through the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. It is truly worth marveling and glorifying the Lord God that He has given forgiveness to mankind.

We no longer need to go to the temple and offer burnt sacrifices for the forgiveness of our sins. Our Lord + Jesus was the One and Only necessary burnt sacrifice upon the tree of the holy cross for the atonement of our sins and the sins of all mankind, so that all those who believe on Him—who have faith in Him and Him alone—have forgiveness for their sins. There will be those who will have no part of our Lord + Jesus. They will beg Him, and all those who come in His Name, to leave. Sadly, in our society the number of people like this is growing exponentially. However, my dear friends, we have come into the house of the Lord + Jesus in faith to receive from Him healing. Here in this house of the Lord God, we do not need to open up the roof and be let down, for the gifts are given freely to all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. Here in this house, forgiven of sins is freely given.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks to our Lord God for healing our sin-sick souls and taking away all of our guilt by declaring to us that our sins are forgiven, because He forgiveness has been given to the Son of Man. We can now arise and walk in the truth that our sins have been forgiven, and marvel and glorify the Lord God that He has forgiven us poor, miserable sinners. And on account of this forgiveness, we now have peace with the Lord God. The Lord's peace and forgiveness be with you all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that, all things being prepared for our salvation, Thou didst call us to the marriage-feast of Thy dear Son, the Bridegroom of our souls; and we beseech Thee, cleanse and direct our hearts, that we may not reject Thy gracious invitation, but willingly follow Thy Word and, being clothed by faith with the garment of righteousness, obtain eternal life with all Thy elect; through the same, Thy Son, Jesus Christ, 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!