

Rorate coeli
St. John 1:19-28
December 19th, 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

This Is the Testimony of John

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Merciful and Gracious God and Father, Who wouldst have us make known our requests unto Thee by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we beseech Thee, do Thou with Thy peace, which passeth all understanding, prepare and adorn our hearts to be holy habitations of Thy Son, that we may receive Him with joy, abide in blessed communion with Him, and continually praise Thee with songs of gladness; through the same Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, 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 season of Advent is the season of St. John the Baptist, for he is the Forerunner of the Christ. He goes before the coming of the Christ to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Christ, the Anointed One of the Lord God. St. John the Baptist prepares our way in this Advent season by preparing us to meet the Lord + Jesus when He comes. St. John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord by pointing to the Lord. This is the testimony of St. John. His testimony is about the Lord + Jesus. This is how we are prepared for the coming of our Lord during this Advent season by being pointed toward the coming of our Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord + Jesus comes to us in His Word and Sacraments. This was the testimony of St. John the Baptist. There was One Who stood among them, Whose sandals St. John was unworthy to untie. This One would baptize with the Holy Ghost. St. John the Baptist baptized all those who came to him in the waters of the Jordan River. He did this in the region of Bethabara. He baptized the penitent Israelites with water. He performed the purification rites that Moses had prescribed in the Pentateuch. This cleansing represented the washing of way of sins; that the baptized person was now clean and free from the stain of sin.

But sin cannot be washed away with simple water. Sin is like and ingrained dirt. One cannot just simply wash it off. It has infested our whole person. This is why St. John testifies of Another Who would come washing all of those who cling to Him in faith with a washing and renewal of the Holy Ghost. Wherever someone is baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, they receive the Holy Ghost, Who creates in him. The Holy Ghost sustains that faith in us whenever we daily remember our Holy Baptisms through daily confession of our sins. Whenever we are sorry for our sins and believe that on account of the Christ our sins are forgiven, the Holy Ghost strengthens and renews our faith in the Christ, the Anointed One of the Lord God.

This is the Christ that St. John the Baptist points us to in this season of Advent. We are directed

over and over again to the Son of God Who came in our flesh to fulfill the Law and redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil by His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. This is the Lord + Jesus that comes to us today through His means of grace. This is the Lord + Jesus Who we meet today in His Word and Sacraments. For these means preach into our ears that even though we are unworthy to untie the Lord's sandals, He has come to give us the gifts which He won for us by His innocent suffering and death on our behalf.

In this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John our Lord + Jesus is fully grown. He is thirty years old. This is the Lord + Jesus Who St. John the Baptist points to in our Gospel reading—the Lord + Jesus Who is about to begin His ministry as soon as He is baptized in the Jordan River in Bethabara by His cousin, St. John the Baptist. In less than a week, we will meet our Lord + Jesus when He first was born into this world. Indeed, we have already met Him after His conception in the Midweek Advent Vespers readings from the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Luke. In those readings, St. John the Baptist leaped for joy when the Lord's mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, entered into the house of Zacharias, Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist.

Even then, St. John the Baptist was overjoyed at the arrival of the Lord and Savior of all mankind. St. John the Baptist knows his place; he knows his role. He is the Forerunner. He is the one who testifies of the coming of the Lord + Jesus. He is the one who points us to the Christ. In the womb of his mother Elizabeth, St. John the Baptist pointed to the Christ, by leaping for joy when he heard the greeting of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Here at the Jordan River—at the house of the ford; Bethabara—St. John the Baptist points those Levites and priests who came from the Pharisees away from himself. He is not the Coming One. He is not the Prophet. He is not Elijah; not in the sense that the Pharisees understood it, as the resurrected Elijah. No, St. John the Baptist is the one prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah; the one who would go before the Lord + Jesus to prepare His way.

St. John the Baptist is the one who prepares us to meet our Lord + Jesus when He begins His ministry at thirty years old. He prepared the way of the Lord for His coming as a Baby Boy by his leaping in the womb of his mother Elizabeth. Last Sunday he prepared the way of the Lord for his two disciples as they were shown that the works of the Christ were the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah, even as St. John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah.

St. John the Baptist prepares our way during this Advent season by pointing us to the Christ—the Son of God, our Lord + Jesus. He is found in the means of grace. He is found in the waters of Holy Baptism, where we have been cleansed by the Holy Ghost, and given faith to cling to our Lord + Jesus.

Like St. John the Baptist, the ministers of today also continue to prepare us to meet our Lord + Jesus when He comes to us. They fill our ears with the promises that our Lord + Jesus has won for us poor sinners by His death on the cross. The ministers of the Lord point us to the Christ, too. They teach us to look for our Lord's coming to us not only in the manger of Bethlehem at His birth to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, but they teach us to find our Lord + Jesus in the Word and Sacraments which gift us with the Holy Ghost. The ministers of our Lord also point us to the day when our Lord + Jesus will come again and take us from this valley of tears to our home in Heaven.

For this promise has been made for all those who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost in the waters of Holy Baptism. We have this great gift given to us freely. Our sins have been washed away, and now we stand clothed in our Lord's righteousness. We are wrapped up in His righteousness, so that the heavenly Father does not see our poor, miserable works, but only sees the righteous works of our Lord + Jesus, Who suffered and died on the cross for our sins. We were unworthy to untie His sandals, but our Lord + Jesus makes us worthy to receive Him, for He clothes us with His righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism.

This is the testimony of St. John the Baptist. This is the testimony of all faithful preachers and pastors. This is the testimony of the Church. This is the testimony of the blessed means of grace. All these people point away from themselves and point to the Savior of the whole world alone—to the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Now then, my dear friends, all of us who cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus have the gifts that He promised He would give to us. We have forgiveness of our sins, eternal life with Him, and salvation from all our enemies. Behold, the Lord + Jesus Who comes to us to be our Savior. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we give Thee hearty thanks that for a comfort to us poor sinners Thou hast ordained and sent Thy Son as a righteous King and Savior to redeem His people from sins, from the power of the devil, and from eternal death; and we most heartily beseech Thee, so enlighten and govern us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may ever know and confess Christ to be our King and Savior, and, firmly trusting in Him alone, obtain eternal life; through the same Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, 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!