

The Festival of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
St. John 21:19-24
December 27th, 2021
All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

We Know That His Testimony Is True

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 love of the Father is shown to us in the Father's Beloved—His Only-Begotten Son, our Savior, the Lord + Jesus Christ. The love of the Father is that Person of the Holy Trinity, the Third Person, Who appeared in a form like a dove when He anointed the eternal Son, the Lord + Jesus Christ, for the Sacrifice that makes Him the Messiah in Whom alone love is known. That love of the Lord God toward us was manifested, was shown, in God the Father sending his Only-Begotten Son + Jesus, the Christ into the world. The Blessed Virgin Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. She gave birth to a Son. He is God and man, God with, and for, us, as one of us. He is the One by Whom all things were made and He became flesh, was made in the Blessed Virgin Mary's womb to be our Brother, and dwelt among us to purify, cleanse, and reclaim us, to love us. He is Life, Love, and Light. He has loved us by laying down His life, by being overcome by darkness, by being a guilt-offering for our sin. We, then, who have been baptized into Him, who by grace confess not just our sin but also Him, who have been cleansed by His Blood, in Him, we are alive. In Him, we are beloved of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. In Him, we have fellowship, live in the light, with, and by and for and in, that most Holy Trinity.

That is the Blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John's message and we know that his testimony is true. It is the message of the Nativity of our Lord and the Resurrection of our Lord as well. It is the message of the Church, of the Reformation, of the Apostles, Prophets, and martyrs. It is proclaimed to us, too, who would have this fellowship, this holy communion, with the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost. In that holy fellowship we are united also to St. John, and to Sts. Peter and Paul, and to one another. Communion means: "at one with" and we are united as one with one another through this sacred meal of fellowship so that love might increase in us; love for both God and our fellow man.

This is impossible love. It changes everything. It turns brawny, unruly fisherman, even the Sons of Thunder—Sts. James and John; and conniving tax-collectors, like St. Matthew, into preachers and missionaries, martyrs and prophets. It dissolves ethnic barriers, distinctions of class and sex. For in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, circumcised or uncircumcised. It removes not just the eternal consequence of sin but sin itself. It turns erstwhile sinners into saints and even gives them good works, the good works of our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who fulfilled the Law perfectly. These sinners who are now saints on account of faith, do these good works for the benefit of their neighbors.

God became Man to be our Brother. The Father rejected the Son on the tree of the holy cross in order to adopt us into His household. The Holy Ghost has made our heart His temple and our mouth His witness. And if that was not enough, He bids us come, bask in His grace; to hear His life-giving, life-changing words; to feast upon the Bread of Life that bestows and sustains life; to be joined again to Him; to be in communion with Him and with one another, for the Word made flesh joins Himself to common bread for us. He places His Body and Blood in, with and under bread and wine, into our frail body for our eternal good. Thus, our eyes see the Word of Life—our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who was preached and proclaimed by the blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John; who recorded all the works of our Lord + Jesus Christ into a book, so that we might read and hear what great things our Lord has done for us. Our hands, or at least our tongues, touch our Lord every time we receive His blessed Sacrament, and we receive from Him forgiveness, life and salvation that strengthens our weak faith and fills us with love for one another. Thus has St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, written and made our joy now full. His testimony is true.

His testimony is true because He was with the Son of God, our Lord + Jesus Christ for three years. As he wrote in his First Epistle, the epistle which is our Epistle reading for today, he heard the preaching and teaching of the Lord. He looked upon the incarnate Son of God in the Person of the Lord + Jesus. With his hands he, and the other Apostles, touched and handled the Lord God in the Person of the Lord + Jesus. His testimony is true because he lived with the Savior of the world for three years hearing, seeing, and touching the Lord + Jesus. He leaned on His breast at the supper of the Lord, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” He was witness to the Lord God being incarnate in our flesh. This Lord + Jesus was the Word of Life. This Word of Life was from the beginning. He was in the beginning with the Lord God, and He was the Lord God, just as St. John wrote in the beginning of his Gospel.

This Lord + Jesus Whom St. John heard, saw, touched, and in Whom He believed on for forgiveness, life and salvation was the same One Who St. John witnessed die. St. John stood at the foot of the cross with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he beheld the Lord God suffer and die for the sins of the whole world. He also ran to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection of our Lord and saw, with St. Peter, the empty tomb and the grave clothes laid within the tomb. He was in the Upper Room that same night when the Lord + Jesus appeared to the ten Apostles (Judas Iscariot having hanged himself, and St. Thomas having not been there that night). He was also there with St. Thomas and the other Apostles eight days later when the Lord + Jesus once again appeared to them in the Upper Room. He ate with the Lord + Jesus in the verses preceding our pericope for today. And he was there to witness our Lord’s ascension into Heaven to sit on the right hand of the heavenly Father. He witnessed the Lord + Jesus perfectly fulfilling the Law of God, and offering up His life as a ransom for all. Therefore, my dear friends, what St. John writes in his Gospel is the truth, for he was an eyewitness of all the things he wrote.

The true testimony of the Blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John is for our benefit. He wrote to show the love of the heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. For our Triune Lord God did all of these things for our redemption and salvation. The Son of God humbled Himself to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary so that He might be with and dwell among His people, and thereby rescue them from sin, death and the power of the devil. This message St. John, and the other Apostles, declare to us that our joy may be full. The message of salvation St. John, and the other Apostles, heard from the Lord + Jesus Himself. St. John passes this testimony onto us. The Lord God is light and love, in Him is no darkness nor hate. If we walk with the Lord God through the faith created in us by the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, we have fellowship with one another; we have “communion,” we are at one with one another. Those who are in the fellowship of the Son of God form the Church. In this Church are cleansed by the blood of the Lord + Jesus Christ. For in this Church, we confess daily our sinfulness. We confess that we are full of sin. We do not deceive ourselves. The truth is in us.

This is the testimony of St. John, and we know that his testimony is true. If we confess our sins, the Lord God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice this day on this Festival of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist for his true testimony, for he testifies of the works of the Christ which make for our salvation. Our Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven, and has humbled Himself to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to be our Lord, fulfill the Law, and suffer our punishment, so that we might see His love for us, and cling to Him in faith and receive the forgiveness of our sins, an eternal life with Him in Heaven, and rescue from our enemies of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. Thanks be to the Lord God for His great love for 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!