

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 9:1-8
October 15th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Ormond Beach Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Ormond Beach, FL
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Son of Man Hath Authority

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemeth.’ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, ‘Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, “Thy sins are forgiven;” or to say, “Arise, and walk?” But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins’ (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), ‘Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.’ And he arose, and departed to his house.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, by Thy Son, hast promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life: we beseech Thee so to rule and govern our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek help from Him, and by a true and lively faith in Thy Word obtain the same; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we have the familiar story of the healing of the man sick of the palsy who was let down from the roof before our Lord + Jesus. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew leaves out much of the detail that is found in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke (whose festival day is this week). Four friends of the man with palsy wished that he was healed. Because of the crowds gathered in our Lord’s home in Capernaum on the Sea of Gennesaret, they were unable to bring the man lying on a bed before the Lord. They then decided to go up to the roof top, tear off the tiles to the roof and let the man down on his bed before the Lord + Jesus. This is illustrated beautifully on the bulletin cover by the artist Julius Schnoor von Carolsfeld (whose art often graces our bulletin covers).

But our Lord does not heal his physical malady right away. Instead, He says to the man sick of the palsy, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven.” Which earned from the scribes the accusation of blasphemy. For only the Lord God can forgive sins. The word blasphemy was used by the Greeks to describe any form of slander; any time someone said something bad about another person. The Jews, however, took this word to describe slander against the Lord God. Blasphemy for the Jews was anything said against the Lord God, any time someone said something bad about the Lord. They also used it in the case of those who took an authority or action from the Lord God which only belonged to the Lord God. This, too, was a form of slander against Lord God. It was a claim of being the Lord God,

or like Lord God. Only the Lord God could forgive sins, therefore in the minds of the scribes the Lord + Jesus blasphemed.

But we know that the Lord + Jesus is the Lord God. He is both Man and God. He is the Lord God incarnate; the Lord God in our flesh. Therefore, He has authority to forgive sins. He has authority to do the things that He as Lord God can do. And according to His Divine Nature He reveals the thoughts of both the man sick of the palsy and the scribes. For it is obvious to everyone witnessing this scene what the friends of the man sick with palsy wanted: they wanted him to be healed. Why go to all the trouble of opening up a hole in the roof just so the man could have his sins forgiven? They could have brought him to the temple to offer the proper sacrifice if that was the case. But our Lord + Jesus can see the troubles of this man's heart and heals him of his sins.

See the tenderness with which our Lord deals with this man's sins. For it is the same way that He deals with our sins. He calls the man, "Son." The Greek word is "teknon" it literally means "child." By the use of this word, this title, the Lord + Jesus is establishing Himself as this man's Creator. He is the Creator of mankind; the Creator of Adam and Eve, our first parents. He is our Creator. And as our Creator He treats us as a tender father would his beloved child. This man is the beloved "son" the beloved "child" of the Lord + Jesus. We too, are beloved children. The Lord + Jesus, just like a loving father, desires our forgiveness. He sees the heart of this man, that it is troubled with sins and grief, and heals his greatest need first.

And be sure that this man sick of the palsy—a man paralyzed—his greatest trouble is not the physical malady that plagues him, but the spiritual one. Even in our greatest physical maladies, our greatest need is also to be forgiven of our sins. Physical sorrows, even the ones that cannot be healed by doctors, only exist until this life is over. Our spiritual sorrows—our sinfulness—if not cured can lead to our eternal destruction in Hell. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus, seeing this man's great need of forgiveness, heals the man of his sins.

But this does not sit well with the scribes. The Lord + Jesus also sees their hearts. No word of accusation of blasphemy is spoken by them, it is only thought in their heads. Why are they thinking evil thoughts? Why are they angry that this man is healed of his greatest malady? In truth, no one can actually see whether or not this man did have his sins forgiven. The only one who can truly know whether the sins of someone are forgiven is the one doing the absolving. Only he can know whether or not he freely forgave the penitent, or if he retained the person's sins. Only the Lord + Jesus truly knows whether this man's sins are forgiven or not, because there is no physical evidence of the forgiveness. This is why forgiveness, absolution, is received by faith.

In private confession, the pastor asks the penitent after his confession, "Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?" That is to say, "Do you believe that your sins are actually going to be forgiven by me in God's stead?" A "yes" answer means that you truly believe that your sins are going to be forgiven. A "yes" answer means that you have faith in the absolution about to be given. In corporate confession (the confession which we do in the Divine Service) your declaration of faith that your sins are truly forgiven is spoken with the word "Amen." This is why this word after the Absolution should not be spoken timidly. Your "Amen" is your declaration of faith that what is offered you have received. For the act of forgiveness is only expressed in words by both the giver and receiver. One cannot look into the hearts of the giver and receiver and know whether the sin has been forgiven.

We can rest assured with our Lord + Jesus that what He speaks is the truth. And we can be rest assured that His servant, the pastor, speaking on His behalf also speaks the truth. Therefore, we can with all confidence add our "Amen" to the Absolution, knowing full well that our sins are forgiven not only by the pastor, but by the Lord God Himself.

But our Lord + Jesus does not just leave this man with the cure of his spiritual ailment. One may not be able to see the forgiveness applied to this man, but one can certainly see when he is healed physically. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus, in order to show that forgiveness of sins has been given to mankind, says to the man sick of the palsy, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." With these words He not only heals the man, but fully heals the man. For one who was paralyzed moments before could not take up his bed and walk to his house. The physical healing reveals that the spiritual healing had indeed taken place. This was the purpose of the miracles done by the Apostles in the New Testament. It confirmed the Word of the Lord that was preached by them. What they preached was established as true by the miracles the Apostles did. The same is true here.

Our Lord + Jesus establishes that the forgiveness offered to this man did indeed take place because He had the authority to also heal this man's palsy. And before He healed the man of his paralysis, our Lord says a wonderful thing! "The Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins." Only the Lord God can forgive sins. The Lord + Jesus, Who is both God and Man, Who took upon Himself our flesh and dwelt among us, also has the authority to forgive sins. After His death and resurrection in the Upper Room on the night of his resurrection He appeared to the Apostles and spoke unto them that they too now had this authority to forgive sins. He said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

We, mankind, now have the authority to forgive sins. Just as Doctor Martin Luther preached in the sermon excerpt in today's bulletin, "All men who are Christians and have been baptized, have this power." We like the Lord + Jesus, like the Apostles, like the minister of the Lord, can also forgive one another's sins. And we do this with the same compassion that our Lord displays in this Gospel reading from St. Matthew today. We forgive each other as a loving father forgives his beloved child. Not grudgingly, not secretly holding and retaining the sins of those who annoy us. But we freely forgive one another, for we have also received this forgiveness freely for Christ's sake. We too, have clung in faith to the Absolution of our loving Lord and Savior.

He has healed us all of our greatest malady: our sins, iniquities, and transgressions. It was for this reason that He became man for us. He came to redeem us back from sin and death by His own death on the tree of the holy cross. By His wounds we are healed. By His malady of punishment and death on the cross we are healed of our sins and iniquities. He declares the forgiveness that He won for by His death to us in the Absolution. The declaration that our sins are forgiven by the pastor in both corporate and private confession. Having had our sins forgiven by the Lord God through his servant, let us also forgive one another gladly, freely, and willingly. For the Son of Man, our Lord + Jesus, hath bestowed such authority to man to forgive sins. May the Lord grant us all forgiveness, life and salvation, and take us all to live with Him in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the 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!