

Midweek Lenten Vespers 3
St. John 8:42-51
March 23rd, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Who Is of God Hears God's Word

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.

There are really only two religions in all the world. There are all the religions which are based on lies, and the one religion that is based on the truth. The religions that are based on lies are really all religions of the devil. The one religion that is based upon the truth is the religion that is taught to us by the heavenly Father, through His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord + Jesus Christ. In this life a person can only belong to one of two religions: a false religion based upon the lies of the devil, or the one, true religion based upon the truth of the Word of God.

As our Lord + Jesus teaches us in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, what we have as our religion is based upon what we hear. We either listen to the lies of the devil, who uses the world and our flesh to also make us believe things that are lies. Or, we listen to the Word of God; we listen to the truth of what our heavenly Father would have us hear and believe about His Only-Begotten Son.

The religion of lies—the religion of the devil—can also rightly be called the religion of mankind. For the lie that is told by the religion of man is the lie that salvation is found in our own keeping of the Law. If we obey our own moral code—which we have made up to fit our lifestyle—we consider ourselves “good people” and then we also consider ourselves worthy of the eternal rewards. This false religion of the world is exactly the religion the world's father—the devil—wants mankind believing, for there is ultimately no salvation in our own works. This false religion—which infiltrates all the false religions of the world—has mankind looking inside of themselves for their salvation, hope, and rescue. This kind of religion draws people's attention away from the salvation that is only found in the Lord + Jesus.

What is most dangerous to mankind are the religions that through in just enough mention of the Lord + Jesus that many are deceived into thinking that they are worshiping the true religion. This is the ultimate lie of the devil. For these so-called Christian religions talk about salvation being found in the Lord + Jesus, but then mix in with our Lord's works and merits mankind's works. They deceive people by saying that the Lord + Jesus has saved you, but now you have to prove you are worthy of salvation by your works. What they give with the one hand, they take away in the other.

A so-called gospel which involves a part for mankind to do in any way, is not a true gospel; this is a false gospel, which ultimately places one's salvation back into one's own hands. This, of course, is

what mankind desires. Mankind wants to control his own salvation. He does not want to surrender his will to any other power or god, that he cannot control. Mankind ultimately wants to be his own god. This was the original sin of Adam and Eve, they wanted to be like God. Adam and Eve's children are just like their first parents, they want to be their own god. They want to believe the lies of the false religions of the world.

This is why what we hear and believe determines our religion. Who we listen to determines Who is our God. The world, like the Jews in the Gospel reading, listens to their father the devil. They do not listen to the Lord God's Son, Who He sent into the world. They call him a "Samaritan" and say that He "has a demon." That they call Him a "Samaritan" is a reference to the town where He grew up—the city of Nazareth. Nazareth was in the Northern Kingdom, and was exiled away into Assyria, and the people that were transplanted there were of mixed blood. Therefore, in their minds, the Lord + Jesus of Nazareth could not be the Messiah, because He was not from Jerusalem or Bethlehem, both cities which were associated with King David, from whose lineage the Messiah was to be born.

That they say He "has a demon" is a reference His casting out demons. If you remember from this past Sunday's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, there were those who said the Lord + Jesus was only able to cast out demons, because He was from Beelzebub. Our Lord + Jesus reminded them that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. A kingdom, or nation, cannot remain standing, if it keeps on attacking itself from within. A kingdom's strength is not found in its disunity—its diversity—but in its unity—its solidarity. But all of this shade cast at our Lord was really just a feint. They were all simply trying to make excuses for themselves to reject this man + Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They did not want to be a part of the one, true religion that He taught mankind. They wanted to remain in their own false religions, which suited their own particular thoughts and desires. They wanted to remain in the false religion of the world, which listened to the lies of the devil that salvation was found in their works.

This is why our heavenly Father sends to us His Only-Begotten and Beloved Son, our Lord + Jesus Christ. He sends Him in order to open our ears to hear that salvation is found in Him alone. He comes to preach to us that our works do not save us. He comes to take our eyes off ourselves, and place them solely on Him as the only Savior of the world. No one can convict Him of sin, for He is without sin. We, on the other hand, sin daily and often. His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross atones for the sins of the whole world, because He suffers innocently; because He suffers death on the cross even though He did not commit any crime or sin.

The one, true religion of the world is only found in the Son of God, the Son of the heavenly Father, our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who makes us His brother by adoption from the heavenly Father on account of faith in Him and His works and merits. We are now children of the heavenly Father. We have as our Father the Father of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. We are His children, because we listen to His Word. We have forsaken the lies of the world. We do not listen to the lies that tell us to look inside ourselves for salvation. We listen to the truth of the Word of the Lord God, Who teaches us that salvation is found outside of ourselves in the works of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

All those who cling to Him in faith has the rewards that He won for them on the tree of the holy cross. We have forgiveness of all our sins. We have been saved from sin and death. We will inherit eternal life with our Lord for all eternity with all the other saints and angels of Heaven. He who keeps the Word of the Lord—those who listen to His Word and hear about the salvation found in Him alone—will never see nor taste death. This is the promise that our Lord + Jesus has made to us. He sees and tastes death on our behalf. He suffers and dies so that we might have life. He comes into this world, with this truth, so that we no longer have to listen to the lies of the false religion of this world. We now get to hear of the salvation found in the one, true religion of the world—the religion that is found only in our Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not listen to the father of lies. He was a murderer from the beginning. From the beginning he has murdered mankind by getting them to hear and believe his damning lies. With his lies many people have been led and deceived into Hell. Let us not listen to his lies about what we must do for our own salvation. Let us not look at our own works, but rather look to the true, saving works of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. He desires that we are made a part of His Kingdom—made to be His brothers and sisters as children of the heavenly Father—so that we may never see death, and live with Him in His Kingdom eternally without end. 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!