

Midweek Lenten Vespers 1  
St. Luke 22:24-32  
March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Bestow Upon You a Kingdom

*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.

On the night before our Lord's arrest, trial, sufferings, and death our Lord + Jesus was gathered in the Upper Room with His Apostles to celebrate the Passover and institute for us His blessed Sacrament of the Altar, wherein He gives us to eat and drink of His Body and Blood for the remission of our sins. We celebrate this institution of this salutary Sacrament on Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday, when we hear of our Lord's suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. The Gospel for that day is from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, the thirteenth chapter, where our Lord + Jesus washes the feet of His Apostles. The events of tonight's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke takes place at the same time. St. Luke, however, does not record the foot washing. The argument of the Apostles over who was the greatest was followed by the foot washing, and then our Lord told them that He was among them as a Servant.

This is not the first time the Apostles were arguing among themselves over who was the greatest among them. This seems to be a regular argument. Here on the night before our Lord's suffering and death to redeem mankind from their sins, the Apostles are arguing about earthly things. "Who is the greatest?" is an earthly argument. It is a worldly argument. This argument only belongs in the hearts and on the lips of those of this world. It does not belong on the lips and in the hearts of Christians. Greatness for a Christian is not a reflection of one's status in this life. Greatness for a Christian is found only in who his God is. We have no greatness apart from faith in the Christ. We have no greatness in ourselves.

Our constant and daily sinning negates any greatness we may think we possess. Because we sin, we deserve the consequences of our sin; we deserve the reward of our sin. We deserve only eternal death and damnation in Hell. There is no greatness in this reality. There is only shame and despair. This is why Satan, and this evil world, and our corrupt flesh want us chasing after these false hopes and dreams. They want us dragged down into Hell. They want us thinking we have some greatness in ourselves, or our works, or our status in life.

Any greatness we can claim for ourselves is only on account of the Lord God gifting it to us. Our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel pericope from St. Luke tells His Apostles that He has bestowed upon them a Kingdom. They will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "Twelve" thrones for "twelve" Apostles. Even Judas Iscariot, the twelfth Apostle, our Lord desires to bestow a kingdom and

throne. That Judas Iscariot became known as the “son of perdition” shows the condition of his heart. The Lord + Jesus wanted Judas to repent and believe on Him, but in the end the son of perdition, Judas Iscariot, rejected the grace and mercy of the Lord and was sifted as wheat by Satan when he hung himself after betraying the Lord + Jesus.

Such is the fate of all those who seek greatness in this world. Judas carried the moneybox. He was the Apostolic treasurer. The money collected into the moneybox was used to feed the poor and hungry. But Judas cared not for the poor, for he would take for himself out of the moneybox to feed his own greed. Money was the final temptation that destroyed Judas, for he agreed to betray the Lord + Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. If greatness was not given to him freely, he was going to take it by force. He was going to sell his soul for greatness. The cost of his demise was thirty pieces of silver. Judas Iscariot was consumed by earthly and worldly concerns. He was not looking to eternal and spiritual rewards. He only sought after a kingdom in this world.

This is why on the night before our Lord’s arrest, trial, suffering and death, He talks about an eternal Kingdom and eternal thrones. St. John the Apostle and Evangelist wrote in his book of Revelation the words that the Lord + Jesus revealed to him: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” The Lord + Jesus desired greatly to bestow a kingdom and thrones to His Apostles. He desired greatly to give them the crown of eternal life. He does this by not showing His power and majesty—His greatness—but by humbling Himself to be a Servant. He served by offering up His life and a perfect and spotless ransom for the redemption of the whole world. All those who believe on Him have eternal life and forgiveness of their sins. All those who believe and trust in Him have an eternal Kingdom bestowed upon them.

We, my dear friends, have an eternal Kingdom bestowed upon us by our Lord’s suffering and death. He offers His life for ours as a ransom. He pays for our sins; He pays the penalty of our sins with His very own life. He shows His greatness by humbling Himself to the point of death. All so that He might bestow upon all those who cling to Him in faith a Kingdom and a throne.

Having accomplished our redemption on the tree of the holy cross, He now intercedes for us to the heavenly Father from the right hand of the Father. He prays for us that we might not be sifted as wheat. He prays that we might learn to be humble just as He was. He prays that in our humility we readily confess our sins, and trust in His compassionate mercy for the forgiveness of our sins. He prays that we might resist the temptation to think that we have greatness apart from the greatness that He bestows upon us through His gifts. He prays that we might not lose our eternal, heavenly reward by being consumed for lust after the earthly and worldly cares, riches, and pleasures of life. He also prays for us that we might not lose heart when the trials and temptation of this life surround us.

St. Peter was tempted in such a way. Our Lord + Jesus even mentions to St. Peter Satan’s desire to sift him as wheat. Satan desired to sift all the Apostles as wheat, even as he desires to do to us. St. Luke leaves out at this point the prophecy of our Lord that St. Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crows, but he certainly alludes to this event. St. Peter would fail as miserably as Judas Iscariot had. Judas failed on account of his greed. St. Peter fails on account of his fear. He boldly confessed in another place in holy Scripture that he would follow the Lord + Jesus even into death. The cry of the rooster before dawn proved that boast to be false. Faced with his betrayal and denial of the Lord + Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly. There was no greatness to be found in his actions.

Such it is with us. There is no greatness in our sinful actions. We can find no greatness in our thoughts, words or deeds. We are racked with sin. We cannot boast of our good works which are filthy rags in the sight of the Lord God. But our Lord + Jesus shows confidence in the repentance and faith of St. Peter. For He tells him that afterwards he should strengthen the other Apostles; to strengthen his brothers. He is able to strengthen his brothers after his sin, for through it he learned the grace and

mercy of the Lord + Jesus; He learned that forgiveness can be received for even the greatest of sins. He learned that the Lord + Jesus truly does desire to give to him and all believers a Kingdom.

Our Lord + Jesus bestows upon us a Kingdom, because He willingly offers Himself as a sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. He paid for all sins that we have ever committed with His innocent suffering and death. He humbled Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary in order to dwell among us and be one of us as a Servant. He was bestowed with a heavenly Kingdom by His heavenly Father because He humbled Himself to endure death and the grave. He was bestowed with greatness. He was given the Name which is above all Names, the Name at which all knees should bow, the Name of "Savior." He is our Savior from death and damnation.

Now, He also bestows upon all those who cling to Him in faith an eternal Kingdom. We have been gifted with the promise of an eternal life in Heaven with Him and all the saints and angels for all eternity. There we will serve Him night and day for all eternity, as we celebrate the eternal Wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom, to His Bride, the Church. There we will share in His greatness, for He has gifted us with the inheritance that He won. We will reign forever in His Kingdom as co-heirs for all eternity. Thanks be to God! 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!*