

Quasi modo geniti
St. John 20:19-31
April 24th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Receive the Holy Spirit

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ hast overcome the world and the prince of this world, we humbly beseech Thee, create in us by Thy Holy Spirit true faith in Thy Son and, through faith, newness of life, that in the power of Thy might we also may overcome the world, and at all times have in ourselves the witness of Thy grace; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, 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.

There are many in our society who have a concept of faith that is backwards. The world, and sadly many church bodies, teach that if one has faith, they can do anything. This view of faith gives all the credit to the individual. It is centered in one's self; it is focused on our ability. All one has to do is reach out and touch faith then you can have godlike super powers. If you want to do anything, you just got to have faith. Faith in what is never really explained. The reality is that this notion of faith makes faith the object of faith. If you believe in your believing; if you have faith in your faith, then you can do anything.

Even when they say "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" they get it wrong. Sure, they make sure to include the Christ, but it what they really mean is that if I have Christ, then I can do anything. This faith is again directed towards one's own ability and level of faith. In our society faith has become something we do. It is something we must drum up inside of ourselves. If you believe hard enough you will be able to do anything. Today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John shatters that notion for those who listen to his words. He even speaks of it in his First Epistle, which is the Epistle for today.

Today's Propers are all about faith. Faith is established in the Introit. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word." Faith in the Lord God is compared to the faith that a newborn baby has toward its mother. The newborn baby cannot do anything of itself. It must rely solely upon its parent. Its parent feeds it, clothes it, cares for it, protects it, and loves it. This is a picture of the Lord God heavenly Father and us. Our heavenly Father knows our every need and well supplies us. He gives us abundantly that which we need out of His great love for us. What St. Peter is telling us in his First Epistle, the place from which the Introit is taken, is that we are to trust, have faith, believe like a newborn baby. Newborn babies cannot do anything, they just receive the gifts of their mother and father.

The gift that our heavenly Father gives to us through our mother, the Church, is faith. Faith is not something that we have to drum up inside of ourselves. It is freely given through the means of grace. It is given to us in the waters of Holy Baptism when our sins have been washed away; when we

have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ; when our sins have been covered by the Blood of the Lamb of God. It is given to us when we hear the promises that our Lord God has made to us through the preaching of the Gospel; the promise that we have forgiveness of all our sins on account of our Lord's suffering and death on our behalf. Faith is given to us when we receive the absolution, that is, the forgiveness of sins. Faith is given to us when we receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine for the remission of our sins. It is given to us by the Lord God in the Church, when two or three, or more, Christians gather together in the Name of the Lord + Jesus and comfort one another in our sorrows over sin, and rejoice with one another that by the merits of our Lord + Jesus we have forgiveness of all of our sins.

You see, my dear friends, faith is tied directly to the forgiveness of sins. This connection between faith and forgiveness is made often in the holy Scriptures. When our Lord + Jesus says that if one has faith enough to move mountains, he connects it to forgiveness of sins (Mk. 11). He does it again here in the Gospel of St. John when we hear of our Lord's appearing to His Apostles on the night of the day of His resurrection from the dead. The first thing He says to His Apostles when He appears to them in the Upper Room, even though the doors were shut, is "Peace be with you." This is another way to say, "Your sins are forgiven."

Our Lord goes even further by giving the Church the means to retain and forgive sins. He even makes clear Who is the driving force. Forgiveness of sins, like faith, is not a work of man. Even though the Lord God may use man as a means, the One Who is doing the forgiving is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the One Who works in the Church to create faith. He works to forgive sins; to give eternal life; to give salvation. We are unable to believe that the message of forgiveness is for us without the working of the Holy Ghost. He is the One Who opens our hard hearts with the message of the Gospel; He is the One Who opens our ears to hear that we have salvation not on account of anything we did, but solely through the work of the Christ.

When we hear the words, "Your sins are forgiven you" it is the Holy Ghost Who is causing us to believe that such words are actually true. This is why faith must always remain a work of the Lord God. We are newborn babes, who cannot do anything to affect our salvation, or earn forgiveness. It is a free gift of our heavenly Father, given to us through our mother, the Church, by the working of the Holy Ghost.

The reason why we fail in matters of faith is because we are looking at our own ability to bring about that which we desire. The world would have us believe we have not believed hard enough. There must be something we have not done. It is all our fault. This view is wrong because it is directed inward at our doing and striving and working. Receive the Holy Ghost! He is the One Who forgives and gives contentment; He is the One Who gives us the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God. He preaches into our ears the Gospel; that we have forgiveness on account of the works of the Christ. If we have the Christ, the faith with which we have been gifted teaches us that we need nothing else. Salvation is our greatest need.

All St. Thomas, and the other Apostles, needed was the Lord + Jesus. St. Thomas gets a bad rap because he did not believe the other Apostles; he wanted to touch and see the Lord before he believed. The other Apostles, however, were also numbered among those who did not believe the report of the women who went to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week. They also needed to see the Lord + Jesus before they believed. St. Thomas serves as an example of all the Apostles. A week after the Day of the Resurrection of our Lord, St. Thomas got to see the risen Lord + Jesus.

Blessed are those who have not seen the Lord, but yet believe. We believe on the Lord, because we have the testimony of holy Scripture. We believe on the Lord + Jesus, because we believe what the

Apostles have taught us about the Christ: that He has suffered and died, was buried, and on the third day rose again from the dead. After His resurrection, and ascension, He gave to the Church, His Holy Ghost, Who opens our hearts to believe the Word of God. Without the Holy Ghost, we are unable to anything in regards to faith. We cannot do anything apart from the Lord God.

St. John in the Epistle reading says that “whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” Many would try to take this statement and make it something that they are doing. As if the one born of God overcomes the world by his own doing. Whatever is born of God is a gift of God. It comes from the Lord God. The gift that comes to us is faith. Faith clings to the Lord + Jesus Christ. The One Who clings to the Christ, Who beholds His hands, feet and side, and sees through faith that even though He was dead, He now lives, has the victory. We have the victory over the world, not because of what we have done, but because we believe that our Lord + Jesus Christ has overcome the world, and the devil, and our sinful flesh. We have the victory because we believe that the Lord + Jesus has spoken into our ears, “Peace be with you.” He has declared to us through the working of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace, that we have been forgiven of all of our sins.

When we have forgiveness, we can do all things. We can overcome the world with its allurements and temptations, for we know that the world has nothing in it that can offer us such hope and joy as that which we find within the Church. In the Church, from our mother, we are given the gifts of the Lord God; we are given forgiveness, life and salvation. Truly blessed are we who have received the Holy Ghost, and cling to our Lord and Savior in faith. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Ever-Living God, Who hast given unto them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, grant us so perfectly, and without doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!