

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 18:9-14
August 28th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Some Who Trusted in Themselves

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 God, Who hast brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the glorious Prince of Salvation, with everlasting victory over Hell and the grave, grant unto us power, we beseech Thee, to rise with Him to newness of life, that we may overcome the world with the victory of faith, and have part at last in the resurrection of the just; through the merits of this same risen Savior, 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.

The whole life of a believer in Christ—a Christian—is one of repentance. Every waking hour is to be spent by the Christian in repentance. What does it mean to repent? Repentance, as you all know, embraces two parts: first that we confess our sins, and second that we believe that our sins are forgiven not because of any work we have done, not because of any sacrifice we have made, or offering we have given, but solely on account of what our Lord + Jesus, the Christ has done for us in His perfect obedience to the Law and His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. We see from this that repentance is really all about turning from inside of ourselves to our Lord and Savior.

We have two people in our Lord's parable from the Evangelist St. Luke today who are both looking inside themselves. The Pharisee looks inside himself and sees all the good things he does. He is not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even the tax collector standing near him. He also fasts twice a week, and gives tithes of all he possesses. This is what he sees when he examines himself as St. Paul exhorts us to do. He sees all the good he does, and none of the bad. He does not see sin within himself. The Pharisee is not alone in this.

Many people today are no different than the Pharisee. They see themselves as “basically good people.” They would be hard pressed to find sin within them. When they examine themselves according to the Ten Commandments, they only examine themselves according to the outward tenets of the Law. They have not killed anyone, or cheated on their spouse, or stolen anything, or told lies about their neighbor, at least in their own mind. They forget just how perfectly the Law must be kept. They forget the finer points of the Law; that we break the Commandments not just in our actions, but with our thoughts and words. They forget that there is not a minute that goes by that we are not full of sin, because we have inherited our sins from our parents—from our first parents, Adam and Eve. We are full of the original sin, which condemns us all, no matter how “good” of a person we may think we are.

This is why it is a very dangerous thing to look inside of ourselves and see a righteous person.

For we have no righteousness without the Christ. It is the Christ Who credits us with His righteousness. We have none of our own. But if we examine ourselves and find only good works, and do not see only sin and death as we ought, we place ourselves in a very dangerous position, because a righteous person needs no Savior. If we have sufficient good works, for what do we need the Lord + Jesus? If we examine ourselves and find only good things, like this Pharisee in the parable did, we have failed the examination.

This is why our Lord + Jesus also describes to us another man in His parable from the Evangelist St. Luke. He stood afar off, beat his breasts, and did not even raise his eyes to Heaven, but simply confessed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" This man understood what repentance truly was. He understood that his whole life was one that required repentance; his whole life required a merciful Lord God; a forgiving Lord God. When he examined himself as St. Paul exhorts us to do, he only saw his sin. And because he saw his sin, he also saw the remedy for his sin; it was the merciful and forgiving Triune Lord God. This man knew where to find the medicine of his soul. Consider where he is at when he makes this confession. He is standing in the temple of the Lord God. He is in the house of the Lord God. He is in the place where the Lord God would meet His people in order that He might forgive all those who humbly confess their sins to Him.

The Lord God is a merciful God to those who put their trust in Him. That is why this man went down to his house justified, that is, bearing the righteousness of the Lord God; being reconciled to the Lord God, because He put this man's sins away. As afar off as he stood on account of his sins, the merciful Lord God removed this man's sins even farther away from him. They were no longer accounted to him. This man placed his trust—his faith—in something outside of himself. He placed it in the mercy of the Lord God. And the merciful and forgiving Lord God forgave this man's sins. He was justified by the Lord God because he placed his faith in the Lord God.

This is how we find remedy for our sin-sick souls, too. Our whole lives are supposed to be one lived in repentance. Daily and often do we acknowledge our sins, and trust that they are forgiven on account of what our Lord God has done for us by His Son + Jesus. He has fulfilled the Law perfectly for us, because we were unable to fulfill even an iota of it. He has paid the penalty which we deserved on account of our manifold sins and transgressions.

And because we are such poor, miserable sinners and are in constant need of being reminded that our sins have been paid for by the Christ, we have been gifted with the opportunity to confess our sins to our Lord God often throughout the day. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther has laid out for us the means by which we can confess our sins and receive the Lord's grace throughout the day. We are taught to pray when we arise in the morning and when we go to bed at night. We are taught to pray before *and after* every meal. If we eat three meals a day that would be eight times during the day when we would pray. One of the prayers that Luther suggests we pray throughout the day is the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer we pray the petition "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are asking the Lord God, heavenly Father, to forgive us our sins. We are confessing our sin and requesting our Lord God to be merciful to us.

Martin Luther has also included in the prayers for morning and evening an acknowledgement—a confession—that we are in need of forgiveness on account of our sins. In the morning we pray, that the Lord God would "keep me safe this day from sin and every evil; that all my doings and life may please Thee." And in the evening, we pray, "that wouldst forgive me all my sins wherein I have done wrong and graciously keep me this night." Both morning and evening we commend ourselves into the merciful hands of our Lord God to guard and keep us from sin and every evil; from all the fiery arrows of the evil one. We are taught in the Small Catechism to live all of our life as one in repentance. Living out each day confessing that we are sinners, and in need of forgiveness from the only One Who can actually give it.

And, my dear friends, if we have further doubts about the grace that was won for us on the tree of the holy cross, we have the blessed means of grace as a further testimony of our forgiveness. When we doubt whether we have forgiveness from our sins, we need only make the sign of the holy cross to remind ourselves that we have been baptized. That our Lord God has washed us free from sin by washing us in the Blood of the Lamb. All our sins have been drowned and killed in the waters of Holy Baptism. When we make the sign of the holy cross, we are reminding ourselves of this fact. This is why we should make the sign of the cross boldly and often. Its use is even encouraged throughout the Divine Service.

Our Lord has also supplied us with a holy meal that when we participate in it, He declares to us that we are forgiven of our sins. For when we eat our Lord's Body and drink His Blood in bread and wine, we receive the benefits of this eating and drinking. We receive forgiveness of sins, and with it eternal life and salvation. For when we come to this altar and kneel to receive this gift, we come before our Lord confessing that we need this meal on account of our manifold transgressions, and we come confessing that through this meal we have what we seek; that is, the forgiveness of all our sins.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us examine ourselves as St. Paul exhorteth us, and see in ourselves only sin and shame from which we can in no wise set ourselves free, and humbly come to this altar and receive from our Lord His meal of forgiveness of all our sins. Then we will go down to our houses justified by the Lord God, because we have not looked inside ourselves like the Pharisee in today's parable, who only saw his good works. We have examined ourselves and found ourselves to be full of sin; sin which our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has fully paid for by His innocent suffering and death. Let us give thanks to our Lord and Savior for being merciful to us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus 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!