

The Festival of the Reformation of the Church  
St. Matthew 11:12-15  
October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## The Kingdom of Heaven Suffers Violence

*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.

Wherever the Gospel is preached in its truth and purity and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ's institution, the Church—the Kingdom of Heaven—suffers violence. Wherever the merits of the Christ are extolled over the works of man and this world, the Kingdom of Heaven—the Church—suffers violence. Wherever repentance for sins is preached, the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. Wherever forgiveness is offered freely for the sake of the Christ, and not because of anything we, or any other man does, the Church suffers violence. The violent ones try to take the Church by force; they try to destroy the Gospel and the Sacraments by violence.

This has been going on ever since man and woman were created by the Lord God and placed in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, our first parents, lived in happy bliss, free from sin and shame in the Garden of Eden. They fully trusted in the Lord God to provide all that they would ever need for their lives. The devil, that great serpent Satan, in his hatred towards mankind, committed great violence against the Lord God's perfect creation by deceiving them into believing that they could be the Lord God; that they could be like God. Therefore, they took of the fruit of the tree from which they were forbidden to eat, and all of mankind has inherited their sin; has inherited the violence of sin and shame into which we have been deceived and continue to be deceived on a daily basis.

Therefore, the history of mankind is a history of violence against the good gifts that our Lord God would have bestowed on those who cling to Him in faith. The devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh have been warring against the Gospel of the Lord God since He first spoke it to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they sinned. In the Garden they were promised a Savior. A Son would be born to them, who would redeem them from their sin and shame, and restore to them the eternal life which they lost on account of their transgression.

Our Lord God spoke this promise in the Garden to Adam and Eve Himself. He promised them a Savior from His very own lips. But as the wickedness of man grew, and mankind distanced themselves from the goodness of the Lord God, in His mercy He sent to them prophets to continue to preach into their ears that a Savior was coming to them. The prophets of old promised that a Messiah, the Anointed One of the Lord God would come and redeem His people. This Redeemer would put on our flesh. The Lord God Himself would dwell among His people. He would redeem them from their sin and shame by perfectly fulfilling the Law which they were unable to keep. Our Lord + Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the

Law which we are unable to keep, so that He might bestow upon us His righteousness through faith. This is the message the prophets were sent to preach to the Lord God's people.

But where this promise is preached the Gospel suffers violence; the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence; the Church suffers violence. Thus, the prophets were ignored, chastised, beaten, imprisoned, and killed by those who did not want to hear the good news of salvation found in the Lord God alone. Mankind clung to their worthless works, and punished and destroyed the ones who preached that salvation was found outside of themselves in the Messiah of the Lord God.

When the Lord + Jesus finally came in the flesh, fulfilling the promises made by the Lord God through the prophets, the enemies of the Gospel—the enemies of the Lord God—also sought the destruction of the Lord + Jesus. They spat upon Him, bruised Him, beat Him, scourged Him, and crucified Him unto death on the tree of the holy cross. All because the Kingdom of Heaven had come down from Heaven and dwelt among them. The Christ suffered violence at the hands of those who hated the Lord God, and He suffered and was killed with great violence.

But His suffering and death was for our benefit; it was for the benefit of the whole world. All those who cling to Him and His works in faith, now have forgiveness of their sins, the promise of an eternal life in Heaven with the Lord + Jesus, and salvation and deliverance from the accusations of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. Through faith in the Lord + Jesus our enemies cannot harm or overcome us. They are defeated with one little word: liar. For they are all liars and false preachers. Their accusations are false, for through faith which was gifted to us in the waters of Holy Baptism, we have put on the righteousness of the Christ. His works are now the only works we possess. His perfect fulfilling of the Law of God now is credited to us. His suffering on the tree of the cross is our payment for the suffering we deserve on account of our sins. This gift cannot be taken away from us.

It was this good news that our Lord + Jesus entrusted to His Apostles. He sent them out into the world to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in the Christ alone. But wherever the Gospel is preached in its truth and purity, and wherever the sacraments are rightly administered the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the Apostles were all beaten, imprisoned, and martyred. Only St. John escaped death at the hands of the violent enemies of the Gospel, but even he spent his final years in exile on the isle of Patmos.

Even after the Gospel was established in the world, and the world was no longer openly putting to death those who professed to be Christians, the enemies of the Gospel found a way to do violence to the promise of salvation through the works and merits of the Christ alone. This attack came from within the very Church itself. Those who were supposed to be entrusted with remaining faithful to preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity, corrupted the message by making salvation dependent upon man's own works. They kept the pure promise of salvation just past arm's length so that they could profit from man's desperation. A whole system of indulgences was created so that men could buy their forgiveness. Purgatory was also invented so that mankind could be kept out of Heaven when they died, and their loved ones could purchase their way out of purgatory and into Heaven.

And those who questioned or opposed it were put to death; they suffered violence on account of their desire to purify and keep pure the promise of the Lord God, which He promised in the Garden of Eden, and which was fulfilled when the Lord + Jesus took upon Himself our flesh. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Church always suffers violence when she preaches the pure Gospel of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. But our merciful Lord God also daily preserves all those who cling to Him in faith. He daily preserves His Church. He daily preserves the Body of Christ. He daily preserves us who are in His Church.

Therefore, He continues to send out faithful preachers of His Gospel. Just as He sent out

prophets in the Old Testament times, and sent out His Apostles in the New Testament era. He sent Doctor Martin Luther to begin the reformation of the Church by posting 95 Theses discussing the abuses in the Church at his time, and the corruptions caused by indulgences. It was not Martin Luther's intention to cause trouble in the Church. He was not as some make him out to be a rebel with a cause. He only desired to correct the abuses within the Church; he only wished to purify that which was corrupted.

It was the enemies of the pure Gospel which once again reared their ugly heads and committed violence against the Kingdom of Heaven. They clung to their corruptions of the truth because they either refused to see the truth, or did not want to give up their positions of power, or because they were just too ignorant to see the truth. They hung onto their useless works, because they considered them greater than they actually are. They could not see that there is no salvation in themselves. Salvation is found only in the works and merits of the Christ. It was not enough for them to just cling to false doctrine. They also sought to destroy all those who preached the pure Gospel of salvation in the Christ alone. Like the prophets and Apostles before them the preachers of Lutheran faith—the true faith—were also beaten, imprisoned, and killed.

The Lord God preserved the Gospel, however, through the faithful protections afforded by those Electors and Dukes who protected the true Gospel preachers in their realms. The pure Gospel of the Lord + Jesus was once again restored to the pulpits of the Kingdom of Heaven.

But our enemies never rest. They have continued over the past five hundred and five years to attack and defame the pure Gospel, and the pure Sacraments. Pietism, Rationalism, Evangelicalism, Ecumenism, and the like, have all continued to war against the pure promise of salvation found in the Lord + Jesus Christ alone. This is evidenced to us by how few are gathered here today to hear the pure preaching of the Gospel, and receive the Sacrament rightly administered according to Christ's institution. The enemies of the Gospel reveal in this that they have a foothold in the Church, and continue to commit violence against the Kingdom of Heaven to drive men away from the Church, and from the promise of a Savior first promised by the Lord God Himself, and prophesied by the prophets, and revealed in the Son of David, the Lord + Jesus.

The Kingdom of Heaven—the Church—suffers violence against her daily. But our Lord God still preserves His Church by continuing to send faithful preachers who like St. John the Baptist point to the Christ as the One and Only Savior of the world. Let he who has ears to ear, hear, the Son of God, our Lord + Jesus has come into the world and perfectly fulfilled the Law of God on our behalf, and has suffered our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. He has clothed us with His righteousness through our faith in Him, and He has gone to prepare a place for us in the paradise of Heaven. That which was destroyed by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, He restores through His great mercy and grace. And He invites us through the preaching of the Gospel, and the blessed Sacraments to join Him in His Kingdom. Here in this place—in the Church, the Kingdom of Heaven—we are gifted with the forgiveness of all our sins, and we will be rescued from our enemies on the Last Day, and taken to our eternal homes in Heaven for all eternity. Thanks be to God that He has purified the Church through the Reformation, and made us sharers in His good gifts. 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!*