

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 25:31-46
November 13th, 2022
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When the Son of Man Comes

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 Jesus Christ, Who wilt come again in majesty to judge the quick and the dead, and call forth all who sleep in the graves, either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation: we beseech Thee to be gracious unto us, and to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Thee, and, having been found acceptable in Thy sight, may on the last day be raised up to life everlasting, inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and give Thee glory and praise, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last week we heard that the Lord + Jesus would come on the Last Day as lightning flashes from the East to the West. He would come quickly, with all His angels, and a loud voice, and the blast of the trumpet. We also hear today that our Lord + Jesus will come again to us. This is our promise, our hope in this world filled with continual sorrows and disappointments. That this world will pass away, and our Lord + Jesus will come to us and take us from this vale of tears to our home in Heaven; the home which He has ascended into Heaven to prepare for us from the right hand of the heavenly Father. When the Son of Man comes—when the Lord + Jesus comes again on the Last Day—He will separate the righteous and the unrighteous like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep will stand on the right hand of the Lord + Jesus, and the goats will stand on His left.

It is interesting to note that the Greek word which is translated “left” literally means “of a good name.” And that is what the goats are those who are given a good name by this sinful and evil world. These are they who cling in this life to their good works. The world praises them for their good deeds. Of course, this judgment of their lives is according to the standards of the world, not the standards set forth by the Law of God.

It is easy for one to be considered “good” by the world. Just do the good works that the world praises. What are those good works the world praises? The Lord Himself gives the answer in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty. Taking strangers into your abode. Giving clothes to those who are naked and without clothing. Visiting the sick and those who are innocently imprisoned. All these things the world praises. It praises all those who do these things.

Now, to be clear, we should do these things. These are all works of the Second Table of the Law, all those works that our Lord God would have us do for our neighbors, our fellowman. These

works are just the natural result of a living faith dwelling within us. Faith in us produces good works in us. And this is precisely the point of the parable of the sheep and the goats. Good works are naturally done by the faithful, but they are not even aware that they are doing them. This is why the sheep on the right hand of the Lord + Jesus, are so shocked to discover that they have actually done them. For faith does not produce people who sit around praising all the good things that they are doing, or have done.

No! Faith realizes that the Law of God requires perfection. It requires something of us that we will never obtain by our own doing and working. The faith that dwells in us by the gifting of the Holy Ghost, looks at the Law of God—looks at our works—and declares that we have not done enough; there is still more that needs to be done. The faith that is in us teaches us that we have not done enough to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty. We have not taken in strangers, in fact, we usually avoid them if we can. It is interesting to note that the word translated into English for “take in” literally means “synagogue.” It is a Church word. This taking in strangers is the invitation into the Church. Gathering all peoples into the Church in order to hear the Word of the Lord. Certainly, we have not done enough to invite people into the Church; our size convicts us of that. But neither have we done enough to clothe those without clothes, nor have we visited the sick and those innocently imprisoned, either.

The faith that dwells within us by the working of the Holy Ghost teaches us that we have not done these things. This is why the sheep on the right hand are shocked that the Lord + Jesus would credit these works to them. “When did we do these things?” When we did it for the least of the brethren, we did it for the Christ. Well, when was that? Again, it is on account of faith. Faith justifies because faith clings not to our own useless and imperfect works, but because it clings to the perfect obedience of the Christ. He did all these works on our behalf. He did them perfectly. Because we are clothed with His righteousness through the faith gifted us through the means of grace, His works are now our works. This is why we cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus. For salvation is found only in Him and His works.

The world would rather cling to their own good works. Men love to be praised for doing good things. We sent up plaques and monuments to those who do all the good works which we find praiseworthy. Whenever someone dies, everybody comes out of the woodwork to praise the individual for all the good things he did for his fellowman in this life. But as our Lord + Jesus points out in the parable; all of those things matter for nothing on the Last Day when they are standing on the left hand of the Lord. They are no longer praised for their good works, except by themselves. They thought they were deserving of praise for what they did in this life, but it is to no avail. The Lord does not praise them, but instead tells them that because they trusted in their works, because they did not cling in faith to Him, because they loved the praise of man above the praise of the Lord God, because they avoided the Church—the synagoguing with the faithful—they are called “cursed.”

Take note, my dear sheep, what trusting in one’s good works merits a person. When we place our faith in our works and deeds, over against faith in the One and True Savior, we will not inherit eternal life, but eternal death in the eternal fires of Hell. And make note too that this is not what our Lord + Jesus wants for us, or any of mankind. The eternal fires of Hell have been prepared for the devil and his angels. This was not prepared for us, or any of mankind. But because mankind has rejected the One and Only Savior; rejected His works and merits, and cling ignorantly—or in many cases willfully—to their own works, they earn the punishment of the devil and his angels.

This is why we gather together—why we synagogue—in the Church. It is so that the Holy Ghost might create and sustain this faith in us through the means of grace. He points us by the Word of God to the true source of our salvation. He points us to the Christ. The One Who after perfectly fulfilling the Law which we are unable to keep, offered up His life as a ransom for us on the tree of the holy cross. It is this work of His—His passive and active obedience to the will of the Lord God—to which we cling to in faith. He credits His works to us. We see only our disobedience and sin, but He sees only His

works, for we are covered with them.

Because we are covered with His works through faith, we also desire to do His will, that is, we desire to feed our neighbor, and give him drink to quench his thirst. We desire to invite strangers to synagogue with us in the Church. We desire to clothe the naked. We desire to visit the sick in their time of need to bring them comfort. And we desire to visit the ones innocently imprisoned for their preaching of the Gospel. We desire to do all that the Second table of the Law requires of us. But when we fail, we also cling in faith to the perfect works of the Christ, Who on account of His great love for us, forgives us of all of our sins.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory, and He will judge the quick and the dead. He will place us on His right-hand side, and tell us that we are covered with all of His perfect works which He did for us. Then He will reward us with an eternal home in Heaven. This world He prepares for us now. This is why He ascended into Heaven. He prepares a place for us with all the saints and angels of Heaven, so that we may inherit the Kingdom which He has prepared for us since before the foundation of the world. For we are the blessed of our heavenly Father, who cling in faith to His Son, and who hope to obtain a crown of eternal life from them on the Last Day. May the Lord God grant this unto us all. 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 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!