

Rorate coeli
St. John 1:19-28
December 18th, 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

The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Scripture Text:

He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as said Isaiah the prophet."

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we give Thee hearty thanks that for a comfort to us poor sinners Thou hast ordained and sent Thy Son as a righteous King and Savior to redeem His people from sins, from the power of the devil, and from eternal death; and we most heartily beseech Thee, so enlighten and govern us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may ever know and confess Christ to be our King and Savior, and, firmly trusting in Him alone, obtain eternal life; through the same Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

St. John the Baptist comes in the wilderness to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. He comes to proclaim to us that the Messiah is near; He is at hand. Soon He will come to us born of the Blessed Virgin Mary wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. He came in the time of St. John the Baptist as a full-grown man. He came as the Anointed One of the heavenly Father; anointed to be the Savior of the world; anointed to be the Word made flesh. It is this Word made flesh that St. John the Baptist cries out about in the wilderness—in Bethany beyond the Jordan River where St. John was baptizing.

He is the forerunner, the one who comes to prepare the way of the Lord. How does he prepare the way of the Lord? By being a Voice crying in the wilderness. He is the voice of both the Law and the Gospel. He proclaimed that the Lord God would burn like chaff in fire those who reject the Lord. He preached the Law that the axe was already laid against the tree of those who live in impenitence. They will be cut down and thrown into the fire of Hell. In our sinfulness, we need to heed the Voice of the Law. We need to hear that our sins are not taken lightly by the Lord God. He threatens to punish all those who transgress His Law. He will punish the impenitent to the third or fourth generation, as we confess in our recitation of the Small Catechism regarding the Ten Commandments.

The Voice cries in the sinful wilderness of our sinful hearts the penalty of the Law; what we deserve on account of our manifold sins and transgressions. We deserve nothing. No good thing do we warrant. Life is only unfair to those who think they deserve something for their deeds, for their supposed good works. Apart from faith we can do no good deed. We are worthy of none of the things

that we possess. We have everything that we own simply because of the grace and mercy of the Lord God. Without His grace and mercy, we would have absolutely nothing. And so, the Voice in the wilderness, St. John the Baptist, cries into our ears to turn back from our sin; turn back from our shame. He cries out in the wilderness of this sinful world that those who continue to willfully live in sin, will be burned in fire.

But the Voice in the wilderness—St. John the Baptist—not only has words of the Law on His lips, but He has the comforting words of the Gospel for those who are sorry for their sins and in faith amend their sinful lives, and desire with the help of the Holy Ghost to live lives worthy of repentance. He not just the Voice of the Law, but the Voice proclaiming the Messiah stands among us. The Lamb of God comes to take away the sin of the world. Behold, this One will baptize us with fire and the Holy Ghost. The Voice in the wilderness cries out into our repentant ears that there is forgiveness and life found in the Messiah, the Lord + Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God. In the Word made flesh, there is salvation from our sins.

St. John the Baptist, the Voice crying in the wilderness, baptized with water those who came to him in repentance. He baptized with the water of the Jordan River. This baptism was a prefigurement of the true baptism that our Lord + Jesus would give to us. Indeed, He has given us this gift of being baptized with water and the Word. He has baptized us all with the Holy Ghost and fire. He has baptized us with His Word through the means of water. He has placed His Name upon us. We are called by His Name—the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We remember and proclaim this Name whenever we make the sign of the holy cross. We remind ourselves that even though we daily sin, and disobey His commands, when we truly repent of our sins the Lord God forgives us our sins for we have been baptized into His Name.

Therefore, the Voice cries out to us once again this day, to call us into repentance. He cries to prepare the way of the Lord. For the wilderness is barren and void of all living things. This sinful world is a wilderness barren and void of all spiritual living things. There is no true love; the love that sacrifices its will for the good of someone else, and not for its own selfish reasons. There is no true peace; the peace that comes from knowing that a sinful person is reconciled with the Lord God, and will not face the punishment he deserves in Hell. In this wilderness of the world faith is hard to find. This world chases after all the evil lies that the devil tells through the voice of the world. The people of this world in cling in faith to their false gods, which are not gods, but only lies. They call good evil, and evil good. This world is corrupt and adds to its corruption every day.

This was also the way it was in the time of St. John the Baptist. He was called and ordained to go into the wilderness of the world, to Bethany beyond the Jordan River, and call sinners to repentance, so that they might be prepared to receive the coming Messiah.

The Church sends out Ministers into this wilderness of a world, too. The called and ordained ministers of the Word, are a voice in this sinful wilderness world, calling sinners to repentance, and preparing hearts for the coming of the Lord + Jesus in the means of grace. The Voice goes out into this dark and sinful world to call the dead to life; to bring light into this dark world. The Voice of the Law and the Gospel goes out into this world through the pure preaching of the Word of God, in order that this world might hear and repent and believe on the Lord + Jesus.

The Voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord.” Even though the majority of this world rejects the Voice, the Voice still sounds in this wilderness world, to call all of us sinners to repentance. We who are burdened by our sins; who feel shame and woe that we cannot shake off the misdeeds we commit every single day find our comfort through the Voice. The Church is preaching into our ears to find comfort from our sins in the Lord + Jesus. The Lamb of God has come to take away the sins of the world. He still comes to take away the sins of the world through the means

of grace found in the Church. Through our Holy Baptism we have been washed clean and pure from sins. When we daily confess our sins, and remember our Holy Baptism, we are renewed and recreated as a new creation. No longer are we tied down and burdened by our sinful Old Adam, but we are set free by the New Adam—the Lord + Jesus—from all of our sins.

Therefore, my dear children, let us turn again once more to the wonderful gift that we have been given. Let us rejoice in our Holy Baptism. For our Lord + Jesus has baptized us with fire and the Holy Ghost. He has purified with fire our sin-sick souls, so that we are purified and cleansed of all sins. And He has given to us His Holy Ghost to preserve and keep us in this cleansing through the gift of faith. This gift of faith is also renewed whenever we continue in our use of the means of grace; whenever we listen to the Voice calling us to repent of our sins and believe on the Lord + Jesus; whenever we remember our Holy Baptism and make the sign of the holy cross reminding us that by our Lord's death, we have life. We have this gift of faith given to us when we come to this holy altar and receive our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of all our sins.

My dear friends, the Voice is crying in the wilderness to come and behold the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God Who came to set us free from sin and death. Behold the Lamb of God Who comes to cleanse us of our sin. Behold the Lamb of God Who came as a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Behold the Lamb of God Who is both God and man; Who is the Word made flesh. The Voice proclaims the Word of God. The Voice proclaims that the Word dwells among us as one of us. Let us rejoice in the Lord for His great gift that saves us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. 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!