

Gaudete
St. Matthew 11:2-10
December 11th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Works of the Christ

In Nomine Iesu!

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

² Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples ³ and said unto him, “Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, “Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Gracious and Merciful Lord Jesus Christ, Who by countless signs and wonders hast shown Thyself to be the true Messiah that was to come in Whom alone we should trust and not look for another, we give Thee thanks for the true knowledge of Thee from Thy comforting Gospel, and beseech Thee, keep us steadfast in Thy Word, lest, being offended in Thee, we be led by worldly pleasure or the malice of men to depart from Thee, Who art our only Savior and Redeemer, blessed forever. Amen.

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

Moses was the first prophet. He was the first in line of the Old Testament prophets that led up to the coming of St. John the Baptist. Moses was also the one who gave the Law to the people of Israel. As the law-giver his acts as prophet reflect that reality. The Law produces terror in the hearts of penitent men. The miracles he performed brought signs of the Lord God’s wrath. He changed water into blood making it undrinkable. He produced all kinds of insects and grasshoppers which consumed the fruits of the earth, and caused starvation. Moses brought boils and sickness by which the Egyptians were tortured. He brought darkness over all of Egypt. Finally, he announced to Pharaoh that all of the first-born sons of Egypt would be killed. All of these plagues were signs of the Lord God’s wrath over sin and rebellion.

The rest of the Old Testament prophets also prophesied about destruction. They, however, prophesied about the destruction of Israel on account of their sin and rebellion; because of their false worship and chasing after false gods. They would prophesy about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. Those ten tribes would be swallowed up by Assyria and led into exile. The Old Testament prophets also prophesied against the Southern Kingdom—against Judah and Benjamin. They also adopted the false religion and idolatry of their brothers to the north. They would be destroyed by Babylon, Jerusalem would be destroyed and razed to the ground—even the temple of Solomon—and they would be carried off into exile in Babylon for seventy years. All of their prophesying was meant to lead the people of Israel into repentance; to create sorrow over their sins, so that they would turn in faith again to the Lord God. In this way they prepared for the coming of the Messiah.

St. John the Baptist came proclaiming this same repentance. He preached that men should turn from their sins and be baptized as a symbol of their forgiveness. He was foretold by the other prophets. He would come as the one who prepared the way of the Lord. Calling men to repentance and to good works. Calling men to turn in faith to the Lord God. Thus, the works of the prophets were to call sinners to repentance; to turn their hearts to the Lord God, so that they looked for and hoped for the Messiah—the Anointed One of the Lord God Who would sit upon the throne of David and bring healing and forgiveness.

The prophet St. John the Baptist pointed out the Christ. He said, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” He even pointed to the Christ, and said, “There stands One among you whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” He even baptized the Lord + Jesus, the promised Messiah, in the waters of the Jordan River. He saw and prophesied about the Christ Who had come down from Heaven and took upon Himself our flesh. He preached about the incarnate Lord God Who dwelt among us in the person of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. These were the works of St. John the Baptist.

But like the prophets of the Old Testament which forewarned about the destruction of the Lord God, the New Testament prophet, St. John the Baptist, also warned about the penalty for continued rebellion and sin from the Lord God upon those who remained in their sin and impenitence. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees “offspring of vipers.” He preached that the axe was already laid against the tree and those which did not produce good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire. He proclaimed about the Messiah that His winnowing fan was in His hand, and He would thoroughly clean the threshing floor, gather the wheat into His barns, but sweep away the chaff into the fire. This is what St. John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets prophesied about the Christ, but when our Lord came, He came not as the Law, but as the Gospel.

He did not turn water to blood, but into wine. He did not send locusts to devour the fields of grain, but supplied bread twice to groups of five thousand and four thousand men. He did not cause sickness, but healed the sick. He caused the blind to see, and the lame to walk; the lepers were cleansed and the deaf could hear again. He did not kill the first-born, like He did with rebellious Egypt, but He raised the dead to life again. He also preached comfort to the poor, both the poor in possession, and the poor in spirit. He gave the people Himself.

St. John the Baptist had prepared the way, as did all the prophets, by turning the hearts of the faithful away from their sin and rebellion. They saw their wicked deeds—their sinful deeds—and repented, and wished to amend their sinful ways. They were brought to the point where they sought something outside of themselves for salvation. They did not look at their works as a means of salvation, but sought works outside of themselves. The repentant Israelites were given the works of the Christ. In this + Jesus of Nazareth, they found someone in whom they could trust to provide for all of their needs, both physical and spiritual.

In the Lord + Jesus all the prophesies of the Old Testament prophets were fulfilled. All the prophesies of the St. John the Baptist were fulfilled in the Lord + Jesus. The Lord + Jesus would destroy the enemies of the Lord God. He would defeat sin, death and the devil. He would do this by offering up His life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world. Satan and his angels would be defeated upon the cross of the Lord + Jesus, so that howl as fierce as they may, they could not prevail against all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus.

What then of the prophesies of destruction by the Old Testament prophets from Moses to the New Testament prophet of St. John the Baptist? Our Lord + Jesus came not as a destroyer of the penitent; He came as a healer and preacher of the good news of salvation found in Him. This good news is for all those who cling to Him in faith; who amend their sinful lives and desire to be free from

sin, not just the penalty, but to be free from committing sins in the first place. But those who desire to remain in their sin; who remain in their unbelief and rebellion against the Lord God; all those who still cling to their false religions and idolatry will face the wrath of the Lord God. For, in their rebellion they reject the works of the Christ. They reject the healing and salvation that He brings.

Therefore, when St. John the Baptist, sends through two of his disciples to inquire of the Lord + Jesus if He was the “Coming One,” this question is not just for the two disciples; it is not even just for St. John the Baptist, but it is for us. Is there another Savior in which we can trust? Is there another “Coming One?” Is there another Messiah, or Christ to which we can cling to in faith? The answer is found in the works of the Christ. By His works of healing and comfort, He reveals Himself to be the one and true Messiah—the Christ, the Anointed One—of us and all mankind. For He brings to all those who cling to Him in faith, not destruction, but everlasting life. He brings to us, my dear friends, healing and comfort which is found only in His works. He brings to us forgiveness for our rebellion and sinfulness. He raises us from the death that sin produces in us, and gives us the promise of an eternal life in Heaven. He rescues and saves us from our enemies of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. So that we need not fear their cries for our destruction anymore.

Let us then, my dear friends, rejoice on this day of Gaudete, the first day in the Church’s year of rejoicing. As our Introit declared, “let us rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, ‘Rejoice.’” For our Lord + Jesus, Whom the prophets foretold, and to Whom St. John the Baptist pointed to, has been favorable to us and brought us back from the captivity of sin and death, and has defeated our enemies, and has promised us that they will be destroyed on the Last Day, when He comes again to take us to our eternal home in Heaven. Rejoice in this! Again, I say, “Rejoice” for our Lord God has visited us His people. 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!