

Judica (*Passion Sunday*)

St. John 8:46-59

March 26th, 2023

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Which of You Convicteth Me of Sin?

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Which of you convicteth Me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who through Thy Son, true God and our Redeemer, didst say: “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death,” we beseech Thee, bestow upon us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may give due honor to Thy Son, keep His Word, trust in it, comfort ourselves therewith in the hour of departure, and through death enter into everlasting life; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, 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.

Today is Judica Sunday. This day begins the season of the Church’s year known as Passiontide. With Passiontide our attention turns to the suffering and death of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ; it turns to the cross of our dear Lord + Jesus. The Introit asks our Lord God to judge us. That is what Judica means, it means “Judge me.” For us poor, miserable sinners this seems a strange thing to ask of our Lord God. What can sinners hope to receive if they are judged according to their merits; judged according to their own works? Scripture teaches us that the wages of sin is death. Because we have all sinned, we will all die.

So then, my dear friends, how can the Lord + Jesus in today’s Gospel reading say that we will never see death? We know people who have died. We know loved ones who have died. The Jews in the Gospel from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John pointed out that both Abraham and the prophets were dead. If they were dead, how could the Lord + Jesus teach that they have never seen death? If they were dead, how could the Lord + Jesus say that Abraham rejoiced to see His day? Our Lord is obviously talking in spiritual and eternal terms. Abraham and the prophets are alive today, as they were in the time of our Lord + Jesus, because they clung in faith to the promise of the Savior, and were rewarded with eternal life. Abraham and the prophets never saw death, because they were immediately taken to Heaven when they passed from this earthly life.

Therefore, Abraham and the prophets not only saw the day of the Lord + Jesus, but also rejoiced to see His day. For they continued to live in Heaven. They lived, and continue to live even today, because they had faith in the Son of the Lord God. They believed the promises that the Lord God made in the Old Testament. This promise was that the Lord God would send a Savior into our world to redeem

mankind from sin and death. Mankind was held in the bondage of sin, and earned the penalty of their sin with death. They were judged guilty by the Lord God for their sins, and received the just penalty for their sins: death. We will also die, just as Abraham and the prophets died. But we will never see, nor taste, death. For we plead to our Lord God to judge us. But we do not plead to Him to be judged according to our own works, but according to the works and merits of the One He sent to redeem us from sin and death.

Abraham and the prophets are alive in Heaven because our Lord + Jesus paid the penalty of sin on the tree of the holy cross. He died bearing our flesh upon the cross. He had come down from Heaven and taken upon Himself our flesh, even as the angel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary in our Gospel reading from last night. In our flesh, our Lord God Who is also man, fulfilled the Law perfectly for us. Therefore, His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross was not warranted. He was innocent of the crime of sin. He asks the Jews in today's Gospel reading, "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" The Jews may have wanted to convict Him of sin because in their jealousy they hated Him. This is why they picked-up stones to stone Him, because they believed He spoke blasphemy by declaring that He was from before birth of Abraham.

This was not blasphemy, however, for our Lord + Jesus is eternal. He is, was, and will be the great I AM. He is the same One Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and proclaimed His Name to be I AM What I AM—Yahweh; Jehovah. The Jews may have had a case to condemn our Lord + Jesus for blasphemy if He was simply a man; if He was no different from any other prophet sent from the Lord God. But He is not! We know that He is not because it is not only Him Who declares that He is both God and man. The heavenly Father also declared Him to be the Lord God. He did this three times in our Lord's life with a voice from Heaven. He was declared to be the Lord God's beloved Son at His Baptism, when He was transfigured on the mountain, and in His final week before His crucifixion when He was preaching in the temple.

By the Lord God declaring the Lord + Jesus to be His Son, He is declaring Him to be God, for if He is His Son, He is also the Lord God. Therefore, the Jews cannot accuse the Lord + Jesus of blasphemy; they cannot convict Him of sin. Neither can anyone else in the world. This question may have been directed at the Jews in today's reading, but this question can be asked of anyone, and everyone, in the world. "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" our Lord asks the entire world. The answer is no one. No one can convict the Lord + Jesus of sin. He is innocent of sin. He is guiltless of the crimes leveled against Him that nailed Him to the tree of the holy cross. His suffering and death were done in innocence. Therefore, His death atones for the sins of the whole world. For He not only suffered and died free from the guilt of sin, but He was also the Son of the Lord God. The Lord God suffered and died in our flesh on the tree of the holy cross, so that He might atone for the sins of the whole world.

When our Lord + Jesus pleads with the Lord God to judge Him, He is declared righteous and innocent. Therefore, His death could not last. He was raised again on the third day, for He was innocent of sin. So then, He lives and reigns forever and ever, because His death was not warranted. When we, however, plead with our Lord God to judge us, we must confess that we are guilty of sin. We are indeed poor, miserable sinners. We indeed deserve death on account of our manifold sins and trespasses.

But like Abraham and the prophets, we will never see death. We will not taste death. Not because we are innocent of sin, but because we can cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. We are credited with His righteousness through faith. We are justified by His works when we lay claim to them through faith. He promises to bestow forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation upon us through faith. And this faith is created in us through the Holy Ghost Whom He sent to us. Through the means of grace we are given faith to cling to the promises of the Lord + Jesus. Therefore, when we plead with the Lord God, as we did in the Introit for today to "judge" us, we are declared innocent. For we cling not

to our own good works; we do not cling to our ability to not sin, but we rather cling in faith to the One Who has paid for all of our sins with His own death upon the tree of the holy cross. We cling in faith to the crucified and risen Lord + Jesus, Who bestows upon us His works and merits through faith.

So then, my dear friends, the promise that Abraham and the prophets held onto in faith, and which caused them to never see, nor taste death, is also our promise. We will never see death, for our Lord + Jesus defeated death with His own death. No one could convict Him of sin because of His innocence, now through faith, neither can we be convicted of sin, because our works are His works, and His works are perfect and salvific. And since our works are now His works, even as He was raised from the dead, even so we too will never see death. For our Lord God will take us from this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven when we pass from this life. There we will join together with all of our loved ones who have gone before us in faith. There we will join with angels, and archangels, and all the company of Heaven for all eternity, singing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom.

We get a foretaste of that eternal wedding feast, when we come to this holy sanctuary and receive His blessed gifts. Here in this place, He preaches into our ears that He is both God and man, that He is the I AM Who was from the beginning. He preaches into our ears that no one can convict Him of sin, for He has perfectly fulfilled the Law of God. And He preaches into our ears that He has atoned for our sins, and the sins of the whole world, so that we can cling to His atonement for our own sins. And then He reminds us that we have been baptized; that we have been washed clean of our sins, and have been buried with Him in His death, so that we have also risen with Him as new creations in His resurrection.

Having been washed clean and free from sin, He invites us to sit down with Him to enjoy a foretaste of the feast we will enjoy in Heaven. He feeds us with His own Body and Blood, the Body and Blood He offered as a sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross. He gives us His Body and Blood in bread and wine. This meal is for all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. This meal is for all those who plead to the Lord God to judge them as being innocent of sins, on account of the Body that was given for our sin, and the shed Blood that was shed on the cross for our sins. This is the meal which we will enjoy for all eternity. It is our foretaste of the joys of Heaven. Indeed, we are joined at this altar by the angels, archangels, and all the company of Heaven, to rejoice that the Lord + Jesus has won for us eternal life with Him in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the 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!