

Midweek Lenten Vespers #5
St. Matthew 10:32-42
March 29th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Him Will I Also Confess

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

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.

Our Lord incites us to boldness. In the previous section in the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew our Lord had told His disciples that they should not fear those who could kill the body. Rather they should be afraid of the One Who could destroy both body and soul in the fires of Hell. One need not fear the enemies of the Lord God. We need not fear those enemies of the Lord God who seek our destruction. The worst thing they can do to us is take our life. They cannot take away our eternal reward in Heaven. They cannot destroy our soul. Therefore, we need not fear those who can only hurt the body.

This is why our Lord continues in tonight’s Gospel reading by telling us to be bold to speak His holy Word. Our Lord + Jesus would have us not confess Him only in our hearts. He would have us confess Him with our lips. To not confess Him with our lips, and to do it only in our hearts, is to deny Him. No one will know what we truly believe regarding the Christ if we only confess Him with our hearts. People will surely know to Whom we cling to in faith if we boldly confess our faith with our lips.

We refrain from confessing with our lips the great things our Lord has done for us and for all mankind, when we are afraid of what our enemies might do to us. This is why our Lord incites us to boldness in tonight’s Gospel reading. When we speak the truth; when we declare that salvation is found only in the works and merits of the Christ, this will cause division and strife. It will drive a sword between those who oppose this teaching. Those who desire to cling in faith to their good works, or their family heritage like the Jews did with their father Abraham, will strongly object when we preach that salvation is by grace alone through faith.

Men always want to add their own works to salvation. Mankind does not like the fact that they have to do nothing to win salvation. Salvation was won by the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, alone on the tree of the holy cross. He alone fulfilled the Law perfectly. He alone paid the ransom for our sins, and the sins of the whole world. It is His sacrifice alone which wins for all those who believe on Him

forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. But the temptation of mankind is always add some work to the Lord's merits. Whether that be doing the right amount of good works, or turning faith into a work, something that we do, and not something that is given to us as a gift. When the truth is proclaimed that salvation is a free gift of the Lord God, mankind objects because he does not want to be left out of the equation.

Knowing the argument that will come, we too often hold our tongues. Not wanting to speak the truth, because we know it will cause divisions. Our Lord + Jesus incites us to boldness. If we confess Him, He will confess us to His heavenly Father. Our silence will gain us nothing at best. But we have the promise that our Lord + Jesus will intercede on our behalf to the heavenly Father when we confess Him with our lips.

The other argument we make with ourselves is that we are keeping silent to maintain peace. Our Lord tells us in the Gospel pericope that He did not come to bring peace but a sword. What does He mean by this, when many parts of Scripture talk about the Lord + Jesus bringing peace on earth? The multitude of the heavenly host even sang this at the Lord's birth. There would be "peace on earth." So how can our Lord say that He did not come to bring peace?

There are two kinds of peace. There is a good peace, and there is an evil peace. The good peace is the kind of peace the angels sang about, and the prophets foretold. The peace that exists when the Church stands in unity under the true teaching of the Lord God. When we cling in faith wholeheartedly to our Lord's teaching. Then the Church stands united in true fellowship, receiving as one the gifts that our Lord God would have us to receive. This kind of Kingdom cannot fall. For it finds its peace in the unity of a shared confession of the true faith.

The evil peace is when opposition to the true faith rears its ugly head, and for the sake of unity, the false teaching is allowed to stand. Peace that allows false teaching to stand is evil. For it allows the evil teaching to have a foothold. And as we have witnessed time and again in Church bodies that have allowed false doctrine to enter into their midst for the sake of ecumenism, the false teaching grows and festers into an assiduous boil that corrupts the whole Church body. The disease is spread by the inclusion of other false doctrines, so that one cannot even make the claim that the Church body is even at all a Christian church.

Peace at all costs is no peace at all. Peace that loves father, or mother, or son, or daughter more than the Lord + Jesus is no peace at all. Peace that loves one's own life more than the Son of God is no peace at all.

Our Lord + Jesus would have us to choose Him over every other relationship in our lives. He would have us choose Him over our very own lives. For men may be able to kill our bodies, but they cannot kill our souls. Certainly, it would be most ideal for our fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters to be united with us in the faith. For them to share the same love of the Christ that we have. It is the hardest thing for us to do to speak out against those whom we love most in this life. We do not want to lose them when we know speaking the truth will turn them against us.

Our Lord + Jesus would incite us to boldness. To hold our tongues is to deny Him. In the end we save neither ourselves nor especially the one who stands in error, or who outright rejects the Lord + Jesus. Our Lord would have us confess with our lips the faith that we have. We do this not to incite enmity, but to allow the Holy Ghost the opportunity to work on the hard hearts of those who do not believe. If we speak not we do not save our loved ones souls. If we speak the truth of the Word of God, we may lose them as part of our lives. But this is better than consigning them to Hell simply because we did not want to lose them as a friend or family member.

Therefore, our Lord + Jesus would have us confess Him boldly, so that all those who cling in faith to what He has done for us, might be confessed by Him before the throne of Heaven. Our Lord + Jesus would have us take up our cross and follow Him. Even as our Lord and Savior suffered and was crucified, so too will all those who cling to Him in faith. For in uniting to Him as our Lord and Savior by faith, we make of ourselves enemies of the devil, the world, and our flesh. These enemies seek our destruction and demise daily. They even at times seek to destroy our bodies, with violence, disease, and death. But they cannot hurt nor harm our souls.

For our souls are protected by the faith that is created by the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. The Holy Ghost preserves and protects us from all harm and danger by continuously preaching into our ears the grace that is found in the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. This is why it is so important for us to gather together in this place as often as we can. For in this place we are united in a bond of fellowship with those we share a common faith and doctrine. In this place we find true peace, for we are reminded again and again that we have as our Head the Lord + Jesus, and He has defeated all of our enemies once and for all on the tree of the holy cross. In this place we find our true family, with our heavenly Father bestowing upon us His love, and with our Firstborn Brother, our Lord + Jesus, Who won for us a share in His Kingdom, and gives us freely of His inheritance.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us boldly confess with our lips that our Lord + Jesus has indeed done all that is necessary for salvation. He has called us by His Gospel, and enlightened us with His gifts, so that we can with all boldness and confidence claim Him as our Lord and Savior. We can with all boldness and confidence not fear those who can kill the body, for we know that our souls rest in the loving arms of our gracious heavenly Father. And He will carry our souls to be with Him in Heaven when our earthly bodies are taken away from us. On the Last Day He will restore to us new and glorious bodies, so that we can throughout eternity praise Him and His Beloved Son, Who along with the Holy Ghost, has saved us from all of our enemies. Thanks be to the Lord God Almighty for His salvation! 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 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!