

The Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession
St. John 8:31-36
June 25th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Son Abideth For Ever

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

Jesus answered them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ‘Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever.’ If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

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.

We are all conceived and born in sin. This is most certainly true. We have inherited this sin from our first parents, Adam and Eve. It has been passed down to us from our first parents’ original sin. Ever since they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we have been filled with sin. From that first sin mankind has been born as slaves—bondservants—to sin. We are chained by sin and unable to free ourselves by any work or merit we think we may have. Bondservants—slaves—do not remain in the house. They may work in the house in the day time doing whatever tasks their masters demand of them. But when the work is done, they must retreat to slave quarters. For they do not abide in the house for ever.

This is what our Lord + Jesus tells us today in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John. We are bondservants to sin. We cannot abide in the house of the Lord God on account of this sin. We need someone to free us from the bondage and slavery of sin if we are to hope to remain in the house of the Lord God for ever. But thank be to our Lord + Jesus, Who frees us from the bondage of sin by fulfilling the Law which we are unable to keep. He frees us from the bondage and slavery of sin by bearing our sins upon Himself to suffer and die at the hands of sinful men. He suffers and dies on the tree of the holy cross to pay the penalty of our sins, and free us from that which enslaves us.

The Son makes us free by His works and merits, and by our works and merits. If the Son does not free us, we can never hope to be free. For we cannot ever hope to do enough good works to merit salvation by ourselves; we cannot ever hope to free ourselves from the bondage of sin and death. Without the Son of God freeing us by His suffering and death, we will always remain under the bondage of sin; we will always remain bondservants and slaves to sin. Without the Son of God setting us free by His works and merits of fulfilling the Law and paying for our sins with His life on the cross, we will always remain outside the house of the Lord God; we will remain outside the Kingdom of the Lord God. We will remain outside the gates of Heaven.

And this is what this Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession, which we celebrate today, is all about. Many Lutherans, and other Reformed church bodies, think that October 31st is the important day in Reformation history. Sure, Doctor Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the Church Castle door in Wittenburg and began the debate over indulgences that led to a Reformation, but it is this day which the Lutherans have always considered to be the true Festival of the Reformation. For it is on this day when the Protestant Estates, without fear for their earthly lives, presented before Emperor Charles V on June 25th, 1530 the Articles of the true Christian Faith, which was taught by those who would become known as Lutherans.

Today marks the anniversary when we proclaimed to the whole world that we are not saved by our own works and merits; that salvation comes from the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. Today marks the day in Church history when those who were held in bondage by trying to save themselves by their own keeping of the Law were set free to no longer trust in themselves, but to cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus.

The devil had so corrupted the Church that he convinced it to look inward on itself; to trust in themselves. This was easily done by corrupting the teaching of original sin. When people think they are not completely helpless, when they think they have some goodness in them that if eked further out by good works and living they can earn salvation for themselves, they will for ever remain locked in the prison cell of sin and death. Dead people cannot raise themselves up from the dead. A dead person is not even aware that he is dead. He must be made alive by the Son of God, through the work of the Holy Ghost. This cannot happen if people believe that they are basically good people; if they believe that they only have a few flaws in them that must be tweaked, and then they will be right as rain.

The modern church does this by turning the Gospel into some sort self-help nonsense. All you need is the right formula and then your life will be better. But that is not what our Lord + Jesus teaches us today in the Gospel reading. He tells the Jews, and us, that we are slaves to sin. We have been conceived and born in sin, and therefore, we remain in bondage as slaves to sin, until the Son makes us free. The Son is always free. He is free because He is free from sin. He can set us free because He has taken upon Himself our flesh. He has lived as one of us in our flesh, but He was never in bondage to sin, because He was born without sin. The Son is and remains free. He always abides in the house. Therefore, if the Son sets us free, we are indeed and truly free.

But our enemies want to keep us trapped in sin and death. They want us to remain in bondage and slavery. They want us to remain dead in our sins and trespasses. This is why they corrupt the Word of God; corrupt the teachings of the Lord + Jesus and His Apostles. They take the focus away from the One Who can actually set us free, back to ourselves so that we remain for ever in bondage to sin and death. The Jews who believed on + Jesus from the Gospel were such men. They did not realize that they were in bondage to sin. They thought they were free. They were son of Abraham—sons of the one who received the promises of the Lord God—how could they be in bondage? How could sons of Abraham be slaves and bondservants? They had never known slavery.

This in itself is a distortion of the truth. These men may not have been slaves, but their ancestors were certainly slaves in Egypt. Were not those sons of Israel—the twelve tribes—sons of Abraham, too? But this is what the enemies of the Gospel always do, they corrupt the teachings of the Lord + Jesus. The religious leaders that lived in the sixteenth century also corrupted the teachings of the Lord + Jesus. They diminished the sin that indwells in people. They set up a system that allowed people to put down a little money, and “buy” forgiveness. They completely buried any teaching on faith and belief. Everything had become an external work that people could easily free themselves. Or so they thought.

But like the Jews in today’s Gospel reading from St. John, these men still remained in bondage and slavery to sin. For bondservants cannot free themselves from sin and death; they cannot free

themselves from their slavery. Slaves will never abide in the house for ever. Those who try to work out their own salvation by their own merits and works will never abide in the house of the Lord God. We must be set free by the Son of God—the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. He has set us free by defeating sin through His perfect obedience to the Law and will of the Lord God. He has set us free by defeating sin, death, and the devil, by suffering and dying for us and all mankind upon the tree of the holy cross. The Son has set us free by His works and merits. We are indeed free when we cling in faith to this wonderful, loving work of our Lord and Savior.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, let us rejoice and celebrate this day of the anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. For on this day in 1530 the Lutherans declared to the whole world that we are not saved by works, but only by the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. He sets us free who were conceived and born in sin. Since He has set us free, we now abide in the House of the Lord God for ever. We now have been gifted with an eternal life with our Lord and Savior in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. There we will abide for ever. There we will live free from sin for ever. There we will no longer be slaves, but we will be called “sons.” We will be called children of the heavenly Father. Even as we are today called sons of the heavenly Father, having been adopted by Him on account of our dear Brother, the Christ. Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have been set free, and are no longer held in the bondage of slavery. 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!