

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
The Tenth Anniversary of Saints Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC of Simpsonville, SC
St. Matthew 5:20-26
July 16th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

First Be Reconciled to Thy Brother

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord God, enter not into judgment with us, who have not from the heart kept Thy Commandments, but regard the precious merit of Thy dear Son, and let us ever be partakers of His righteousness. Enable us also by Thy Holy Spirit to walk in Thy fear, true faith, and holiness of living and to beware of pride and security, that we may not be cast into everlasting prison, but enter into Thine eternal Kingdom; through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, 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.

My dearly beloved, some might question why we do not have a different set of Propers; ones that would better fit the occasion, as is often the case with many congregations. Why not have Propers that reflect the fact that we are celebrating a significant anniversary for our parish? Would it not make more sense? But, my dear friends, I believe the fact that we have not diverted from the historic lectionary speaks volumes to our faithfulness. This is why this parish was founded in the first place. It was founded by those who wished to remain faithful to the teachings and historic practices of the Lutheran Church. We have remained faithful to that from the foundation, why would we change that on our tenth anniversary.

We have an unchanging Lord God. He is the same yesterday, today, and always. This is also expected of His Bride, the Church. We are to keep the same doctrines that were taught by the Apostles as they heard them from the mouth of their Lord and Savior, the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We are to remain faithful and diligent in the doing the task that He—our Lord and Savior—has set before us. What is the task that He has given to the Church? What is the task that He has given to this parish located in Simpsonville, SC? To Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession located in Simpsonville, SC He has given us the task of remaining faithful and diligent in preaching the pure Gospel of salvation in Him alone. He has given us the task of remaining faithful and diligent in administering the Blessed Sacraments according to His institution.

This task has not changed since our founding ten years ago. As the Lord is unchanging, so is the work He has given to the Church. We were founded upon these principles, and we desire to remain steadfastly faithful to them. Part of this is remaining faithful to the historic lectionary, as we have it handed down to us from our forefathers. For the message of salvation remains the same from year to year and decade to decade. The Gospel of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, does not change whether we have just formed, or if we are celebrating our ten-year anniversary, or even if we by the grace of the Lord God are blessed to celebrate our one-hundred-year anniversary. The message of salvation, like our Lord, like the liturgy, like the historic lectionary, does not change with the whims of society and this world.

For the truth that we are poor, miserable sinners will always remain to be the truth. We will suffer the daily battles with sin until our Lord + Jesus delivers us from this vale of tears, either by calling us to our eternal home through death, or by His returning to us on the Last Day to welcome us into His eternal Kingdom in Heaven.

This is why we hear today the words of our Lord + Jesus from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. He tells us the truth. Except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For those who are deceived into thinking that they are able to accomplish this having been puffed up in their own pride and ability to keep the Law—the Law which they establish for themselves—remain outside the Kingdom of Heaven. They have been deceived by the devil, the world, and their own flesh. They hear the Law and think they are fulfilling it by not committing the outward tenets of the Law.

Our Lord + Jesus sets all of us straight with today's Gospel reading, however. He calls us sinners back into repentance. For there were those who thought they were keeping the Law of God, especially the Fifth Commandment, because they had not acted like Cain with His brother Abel. They had not murdered anybody, so they had kept the Law. But our Lord teaches us that we are not judged by the letter of the Law but by the spirit of the Law. For even hating our brother, or calling Him fool, or "Raca," that is, calling him empty-headed, is breaking the Fifth Commandment. For our Lord God requires of us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We do not hate ourselves, or call ourselves fools and idiots, especially when we are puffed up in our own pride. Therefore, we should not do this to our brothers and neighbors no matter what their station in life is; no matter how much we may consider ourselves to be above them.

And that is the point that our Lord + Jesus is trying to drive into our brains today. He does not want us looking inside ourselves for our salvation. He does not want us comparing ourselves to other people, especially not those who we consider to be our superiors, like the scribes and Pharisees were to the Jews. Our Lord + Jesus would not have us looking at our ability to keep the Law, for we cannot ever keep it perfectly. Therefore, we must divest ourselves of the notion that we can keep the Law. We must hear the preaching of the Law with its full terror and consequence. Except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees we can in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, salvation is not found in us, or our works.

Salvation is found only in the Lord + Jesus. Our Lord would have us hear His preaching from the Sermon on the Mount today and realize that we cannot save ourselves. He would have us trust in the One Who is the same yesterday, today and forever. He would have us cling in faith to Him. For He has kept perfectly the Law which we are unable to keep. He has paid the penalty of our sins by His own suffering and death. Our Brother has reconciled us to the Father by His works and merits.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, let us look to the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ and rejoice that all of our sins have been paid for by our Savior's act of love for us. He faced our Adversary, the devil, and soundly defeated Him. He freed us who were trapped in the bondage of sin and death, and made

us free. He restored us to life again. We have been raised out of death into life by the works of our Lord and Savior. And this is the message that our Lord + Jesus would have us hear over and over again. This is why we remain faithful to the historic lectionary, so that this message is not lost to us. So that we do not find ourselves pulled away by the various changes and chances of life as so many churches and congregations do; pulled along by the whims of society and this world so that the Gospel is so diluted that it becomes nothing more than one more self-help consultation. White noise in a sea of white noise.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, let us rejoice this day that have by the grace of the Lord + Jesus remained faithful to preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity, and that we have remained faithful to administering the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. For this is the task that our Lord has given to the Church; it is the task He has given to us saints of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession located in Simpsonville, SC. Even though the world may change. Even though the society seeks to pull us all in different directions with every new crisis and strife, we continue to remain faithful to the promise of salvation found in our Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. For we are but poor, miserable sinners in need of the Lord God's grace. And He has bestowed that grace upon us through the suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus.

He has reconciled us to our heavenly Father, and made us a family gathered around His Word and Sacraments. So that knowing our own sins, and how we struggle with our own sin, we can offer comfort and consolation to all of our brothers in Christ. We can offer forgiveness to one another. May the Lord God Almighty continue to bless this parish as we strive to remain faithful to the task He gave us ten years ago. And may He guide and protect us so that we continue to remain faithful for many years and decades to come. 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!