

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 14:1-11
October 1st, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Sit Not Down in the Chief Seat

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And He spake a parable unto those that were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief seats; saying unto them, ‘When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat; lest haply a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, “Give this man place;” and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we pray Thee so to govern and guide us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may with all our heart hear and receive Thy Word, and truly sanctify the Lord’s Day, to the end that we may, in turn, be sanctified by Thy Word, that we may rest all our confidence and hope on Jesus Christ, Thy Son, amend our lives in accordance with Thy Word, and avoid every offense, until we shall, by Thy grace in Christ, be saved forever through the same, 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.

Pride destroys the soul. Unfortunately, pride is considered by our society to be a virtue. “Make no apologies for who you are”; “Be proud of yourself”; “You are the only person that matters”; “All you really need is you” are all sayings the world says. But, pride destroys the soul. Why, you may ask? Because pride eliminates one of the things our Lord God would have us have in abundance: it eliminates mercy. Mercy is really the opposite of pride. With pride we exalt ourselves over other people. We look down our noses on other people. We think we are better, more righteous, more worthy, more everything, than other people. We exalt ourselves and expect everyone else to be humbled before us.

Such was the case with the Pharisees in today’s Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. We are given three examples of how their pride was on full display. First, St. Luke tells us that our Lord + Jesus was invited to eat bread at the home of a ruler of the Pharisees. It was the Sabbath. But unlike we learn from Martin Luther’s Large Catechism on the third commandment, the Book of Concord reading for today in the Lutheran Herald, they did not concern themselves with holy things: reading God’s Word, studying God’s Word, hearing God’s Word, and being involved conversations about God’s Word. They had the Son of God with them in the house, the One Who gave them the Word, which they supposedly concerned themselves with in their daily lives, but what does St. Luke tell us about them? They watched Him.

They exalted themselves above the Incarnate Lord God! They were only concerned whether or not He would obey the Sabbath regulations. The regulations that stated no one was allowed to do any

work. Which is why a man with dropsy suddenly shows up, which we will get to in a moment. They were concerned that he would do the work of healing on a Sabbath. The Pharisees had forgotten what the true intention of the Sabbath was all about. It is the same intent that we have now on the New Testament Sabbath of Sunday. It a day set aside to occupy ourselves with God's Word, and exercise ourselves therein. The Sabbath was not about (again as the Large Catechism states regarding the Third Commandment) to "sit behind the stove and do no rough work, or deck ourselves with a garland and put on our best clothes." The Sabbath was, and is, not about not doing work and wearing one's best clothes, but about being occupied with the things of the Lord God.

Here they had the Lord God incarnate with them; eating bread with them, and they were concerned about the wrong thing. Not only did they exalt themselves over and above the Lord incarnate that sat with them to eat, but they exalted themselves over the basic tenets of the Sabbath. They exalted themselves over the One Who gave them the Sabbath and its regulations. It was for their benefit. The benefit of hearing God's Word and being sanctified by it. This is how we keep the Sabbath. This is how we keep the Sabbath holy. It is holy in itself, but we keep it holy by occupying ourselves on this day with the Word of God.

This is why we have gathered here today, to hear and receive God's Word and gifts. We have come to be with the Lord and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation that He bestows upon us through the Word and the Sacraments; the means of His grace. We have come here to humble ourselves on account of our manifold sins and trespasses and seek the Lord's mercy in the absolution that He gives. We in turn will show mercy to each other, forgiving one another's sins, for we know that we have no cause to be prideful. We are not better than each other, but we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of the Lord God.

But the Pharisees, filled with their pride, exalt themselves above the Lord + Jesus, and above the Sabbath, and they also exalt themselves over the man with dropsy. He is introduced and excused so quickly in the text. There is no explanation of how he got there, or why he was suddenly in the midst of everyone. Was he there to be healed? Probably, but the text does not say. It is clear that this certain man with dropsy was brought in as test for the Lord + Jesus; to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. This man with dropsy also reveals their pride. For they are not concerned with this man's condition at all. They could not care less whether or not this man was healed. They exalted themselves far above this man. The only purpose this man serves for them is to reveal a perceived defect in the Lord + Jesus. If the Lord + Jesus heals on the Sabbath then He cannot be without sin, and therefore, He is not the Messiah.

But our Lord exposes their hypocrisy and their pride. He poses a question. Which of them would not rescue an animal trapped in a well on the Sabbath, even though it would break the Sabbath regulations on the amount of work allowed? None of them would be so cruel as to allow an animal to suffer such agony. How much more value is this man with dropsy? This man was their neighbor, someone they were to love as themselves. But they had no care for this man at all. This reveals their pride. For they are only concerned about themselves and their position in life, and only concerned with being right about their understanding of the Sabbath. They wanted no instruction, certainly not from this Man + Jesus of Nazareth. They already had everything figured out, so they needed no instruction, or correction, from Him. Further, they had no concern, no mercy, for this poor man who suffered from dropsy.

Dropsy is a condition we now call edema. It is a condition where certain parts of the body fill up with fluid. It can be painful, and can be deadly depending upon the part of the body that is infected. Certainly, such a man deserves our mercy, our humility and concern over his condition. But the Pharisees gave to such mercy to this man. He was only a plant to test the Lord + Jesus. So filled with pride were the Pharisees on this Sabbath day. But our Lord + Jesus shows the man mercy by taking

him, and healing him, and letting him go.

And then St. Luke gives us another parable of our Lord which at first does not seem to be connected to the first half of the Gospel. The only connection, it seems, is that this is the same meal related in the beginning of chapter fourteen. But the connection is that this is the third time the pride of the Pharisees is on display. And it reveals just how corrupted by pride the Pharisees have become. It reveals how destroyed their souls are. For, even though it is wrong and sinful, one can understand their hatred and pride towards the Lord + Jesus. We can understand their pride towards the man with dropsy, too. These two are people who the Pharisees have always looked down their noses upon. They have never cared about the Lord + Jesus, or the man with dropsy. They had no mercy for either.

But in the second half of the Gospel reading from St. Luke we see that they do not even have mercy for each other. These are the men with whom they share a theological teaching. These are men with whom they agree with in matters of God's Word. But even among their supposed best friends, they are still fighting over the best seat in the house: the place of honor. The sad part is they all try to make a claim for the best seat. They all think they are better than the other Pharisees. See how much pride has corrupted and destroyed their soul. They do not even care about their close friends. Pride leads us to only care about ourselves. It destroys all mercy in us.

When we are filled with pride, we have no mercy for others. We exalt ourselves over other people and expect them to bow to whatever false philosophy or teaching we are spewing. When we are filled with pride, it is hard for us to see just how damaged we are. When we are only seeing the good things we do, when we are obsessed with how good of a person we are, we cannot easily see how much sin has affected us. We will always sit ourselves in the chief seat because we truly believe that we are the ones who deserve it over other people. This is certainly what the world, and our society, does. It is so puffed up with its own pride that it demands we forsake the clear teachings of the Word of God, in order to believe its corrupt lies.

If we are to be honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we are at times filled with pride. Even if it is only in certain situations, or at certain times, or among certain people. We all have had moments where we considered ourselves better than someone else. We have all had times where we have not shown other people the mercy, we would have shown to us. We can easily bash the Pharisees for their pride, but they only serve as an example to us of our own pride and lack of humility. They serve to lead us into repentance; to lead us into humility.

Our Lord + Jesus shows His mercy in today's Gospel pericope. He shows that He does not treat people the way they deserve to be treated. The Pharisees certainly deserve the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure; they deserve to be ignored by the Lord; they deserve for the Lord to just get up and leave them to their prideful rebellion. But our Lord + Jesus does not do that. He teaches them about mercy. First, with the parable about the animals being trapped in a well. He teaches them that the same mercy they would have for their ox or donkey is the same mercy they should show towards their fellow man. Second, our Lord shows them mercy, by telling them a parable meant to convict them of their pride. Our Lord + Jesus shows them mercy by leading them into repentance, to a change of heart.

This is how loving and merciful our Lord + Jesus is toward us and all mankind. For He humbles Himself to be born of a virgin in order that He might be lifted up on the tree of the holy cross. He humbles Himself that He might exalt us into eternal life with Him. He humbles Himself so that He might rescue us, and all the world, from our pride and selfishness. He comes to show us mercy. He comes to win forgiveness, life, and salvation for us. He chooses the lowest seat for us, so that by His death and resurrection He might ascend to sit on the chief seat until He comes again on the Last Day to judge both the quick and the dead. For He knows how much we struggle with pride, how we look down on our fellow man, and He desires that we would humbly confess our sins, and cling to Him and His works,

and forsake all pride and hubris in us. For life and salvation is not found in us or who we are, but only in the Christ, the Son of God, Who gives us His holy Word on this Sabbath day, that we may be occupied with it and all things holy. May He grant us grace to continue this day in His Word. 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!