

The Festival of St. Lucy, Martyr
St. Matthew 13:44-52
December 13th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

One Pearl of Great Price

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”

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.

My dearly beloved, last week we heard about Saint Nicholas, who lived in the early part of the fourth century, and who endured persecution and torture under Diocletian, the last Roman emperor before Constantine. Today, we hear about another saint from the same time period, Saint Lucy, sometimes called “Lucia,” of Syracuse. She also endured persecution at the end of Diocletian’s reign. Unlike Saint Nicholas, however, who survived his persecution to be one of the confessors of the faith at the council of Nicea, St. Lucy is celebrated as being one of the virgin martyrs. In our Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew we hear our Lord’s parable about a pearl of great. These saints found a pearl of great price that they refused to give up for the vanities of this earthly life.

Saint Lucy of Syracuse was born in 283 A.D. Her father was believed to be of Roman descent, and it is believed her mother, whose name was Eutychia, was of Greek ancestry. She was born into a rich and noble family, however, her father died when she was five years old leaving her mother and her alone without a protective guardian. St. Lucy had decided to dedicate her virginity to the Lord, that is, to remain a virgin, in order that she might give her dowry to the poor. This, however, was unbeknownst to her mother who was slowly dying from a bleeding disorder, and fearing for St. Lucy’s future, arranged for her daughter’s marriage to a wealthy young man who was not a Christian.

In the Lord God’s grace, St. Lucy’s mother was cured of her bleeding disorder, and since the fear of her death was diminished, St. Lucy convinced her mother that it was beneficial to give the good portion of her riches to the poor, just like she had originally intended. St. Lucy said, “...whatever you give away at death for the Lord’s sake you give because you cannot take it with you. Give now to the true Savior, while you are healthy, whatever you intended to give away at your death.” For she had found a pearl of great price that was worth more than any riches on this earth. She had the true treasure of Heaven. This treasure could not be taken away from her.

When St. Lucy and her mother began to distribute her dowry and their other riches to the poor, the news reached her young suitor, who was not pleased, and reported her as a Christian to the

governor of Syracuse, Paschasius. He ordered St. Lucy to burn a sacrifice to an image of the emperor, Diocletian. When she refused, he ordered her to be defiled in a brothel. However, according to legend, when the guards came to take her to her punishment, they were not able to move her, even when they hitched her to a team of oxen. They even tried to burn her to death, but the wood would not burn. She would eventually have her eyes gouged out and would die by having a sword put through her throat. This is why one may see this image of St. Lucy with a sword through her throat in artwork.

This is why this saint is celebrated on this day. She sets an example for us on how to live in faith. She endured suffering and death. She looked to the heavenly realms instead of this earthly kingdom. And willingly helped the poor from her wealth. Like our Lord + Jesus preached in the Gospel pericope, she found a treasure in a field and sold all that she had to buy it. She found a pearl of great price and sold all that she had to receive it. She gave of both her earthly possessions and her very own life in order to obtain the crown of Heaven. In her earthly life she reflected the meaning of her name. Lucia means light. She had found the true light; the One coming into the world and would not give up that Light for any earthly treasure.

In this she mirrors our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. For our Lord considers His creation—He considers us—to be a treasure hidden in the field; He considers us to be a pearl of great price. He also forsook His heavenly throne in order that He might come down from Heaven and dwell among us as one of us. He humbled Himself to be born of a Virgin. He lived in our flesh and dwelt among us in our flesh. Our Lord God became one of us in order to redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Indeed, our Lord + Jesus sold all that He had, even His very own life, in order to buy us back from sin and death. Our Savior gave His life to purchase us, the pearl of great price; the treasure hidden in the field.

This is the example that St. Lucy also exhibited. For she clung in faith to the Lord + Jesus, and the promises of Heaven. She knew that she was a pearl of great price, bought with the blood of the Lamb of God. No amount of persecution, suffering or death could take that away from her. For her dear Lord—our dear Lord—did exactly the same thing. In fact, our Lord did not just take upon our sins upon the tree of the holy cross, but the sins of the whole world. This is of how much worth we are to our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. We are without price; we are priceless to Him. He gives all in order that we might be His forever and ever.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us celebrate St. Lucy on this her festival day. For she chose the Light of the world—our Lord + Jesus—rather than the pleasantries of this life. She chose a life in Heaven, rather than a life of comfort in this earthly realm. The true light illumines this dark world. For the true light points us to our salvation; to our Lord and Savior the Christ, Who is the Light of the world. In Him is life and light. He distills the darkness and sin that exists in this world. He has found a one pearl of great price—He has found you in your sins and trespasses—and has given His life as a ransom for yours. He did not avoid death in order to win for us an eternal kingdom, but gladly and willingly gave up His life as an innocent sacrifice for our sins and trespasses.

St. Lucy also willingly gave up her life for the rewards of Heaven. She found one Pearl of great price, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, that she would gladly and willingly lay down her life for. She would gladly sell all that she had, even her own life, to enjoy the heavenly treasures that will never pass away.

May we also, my dear friends, cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus with such strong longing. May we endure persecutions, suffering, and even death to obtain the crown of eternal life. For the treasures of this world will pass away. They will all become dross and rust and will not last forever. But the gifts of Heaven that our Lord + Jesus bought for us with His own precious Blood and His innocent suffering and death will never pass away. During this Advent season as we wait for our Lord's coming, let us cling in faith to Him and His gifts. For when the trials of this life surround us, we can find our true treasure

in our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. In Him we have found one Pearl of great price. For He has sold all that He had to purchase us, so that we might live with Him in Heaven for all eternity. May the Lord + Jesus grant this to us all quickly. 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!