

Midweek Lenten Vespers #3
St. John 8:42-51
March 6th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Shall Never See Death

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Jesus answered, ‘I have not a demon; but I honor my Father, and ye dishonor Me. But I seek not Mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death.’”

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 dear friends, in this past Sunday’s Gospel reading there were those who had accused the Lord + Jesus of being in cahoots with Beelzebub. They had said that He was casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub. Today, our Lord + Jesus turns the tables on them. He describes what the devil is like; what he has always been like since the beginning. The devil is a liar. When he speaks, he speaks nothing but lies. He can speak nothing that is true. The devil does not stand in the truth. This is how a person can tell that he is in cahoots with the devil, with Beelzebub, and not in league with the Lord God: when he is clinging to a lie.

How does one know that he is clinging to a lie? A lie comes from the devil. The devil uses the world and our own sinful flesh to spread his lies. So, if certain teachings are coming from the world or the cravings of our own flesh, we know that such things are lies. Anything that comes from them is from the devil, and therefore, they are lies.

For truth can only come from the Lord God. Truth is found in His Word. When the world and our flesh speak against the truth of the Word of God—what the Word of God would have us believe and practice—we know that such things are lies. For such lies come from the father of lies, the devil. Truth comes from the Lord God, our heavenly Father, and confirmed by His Only-Begotten Son, our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, my dear friends, whether we are in the truth or abiding by a lie can be determined by Who our Father is. The world would have as their father the father of all lies. The Church prefers to have as her Father the Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

The father of the world, the father of lies, the devil treats his children with contempt. The world blathers on ignorantly about love and care for one another, but it is all a lie. For the devil in his deception of the world, and among unbelievers, only seeks this world’s destruction. This was the other trait of the devil that our Lord + Jesus points out to the crowds. He is not only a liar, but he is also a murderer. He has sought to kill mankind since the beginning; since he first met Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

as a serpent in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He used his lies and deception to kill our first parents, Adam and Eve. They ate of the fruit of the tree which they were forbidden, and gained only death.

From now on mankind can see death in their future. All of mankind dies. We will all be laid in the grave. We will all die and be buried. This is what the father of lies, the devil, has desired for mankind since the beginning. And he continues to lead men into death—eternal death—through leading them to believe his lies. They believe his lies and claim him as their father, but their father only wants to see them join him in eternal death and damnation. The world flocks to their lying father, and races toward their eternal doom.

But, my dear friends, it does not have to be this way for mankind. Indeed, it is not this way for us who cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus. For just as much as the devil speaks lies and murder day and night without ceasing, our Lord + Jesus speaks the truth and life through His means of grace and the work of the Holy Ghost wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name. Those who cling to His Word—to the truth of His Word—will never see death. For our Lord + Jesus is the Lord of Life.

What do we need to do to obtain this life? We need only stop listening to the lies of the devil, and listen and hear the Word of Truth, which tells us that our salvation is not bound up in works and merits, but has been secured by our Lord's suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. He endured the death which we deserved. He saw the death which we deserved to see. He suffered, was crucified, and was buried. Then He descended into Hell to declare His victory over sin and death; to declare His victory over the devil and his lies. He went to the place where all mankind deserved to go on account of their manifold sins and trespasses, and declared that death and Hell could no longer hold those who cling to the truth of the Word of God in bondage.

And our Lord then rose again on the third day confirming with a visible sign His victory over sin and death. He showed that He was indeed the Lord of Life. We have eternal life now in Him. For we no longer listen to the lies of the father of lies, the devil. But we believe on the One Who preaches the truth of salvation in His works alone. This is how one keeps the Lord's Word. We keep His Word by not only hearing it, but believing it and taking it to heart. We keep His Word by doing what the Word says. The world would rather follow their own will, having been corrupted by the father of lies. Their path is eternal destruction and death.

We, however, my dear friends, will never see death. For our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ has already suffered the punishment of our death. He has opened up for us the way of everlasting life. He has defeated that father of lies and death. He has defeated once and for all the power of Satan. He can no longer harm us. The deed is done. The victory of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ remains for us. We have been saved from sin and death by our Lord's suffering and death. The Stronger Man has defeated the strong man of the devil. And our Lord has opened up for us the Kingdom of Heaven.

We now get a foretaste of that eternal Kingdom whenever we gather together in this holy house. For in this house of the Lord God, we hear the truth of the Word of God, the pure preaching of the Word of God. And here in this house of the Lord God the devil's lies that lead to death are silenced with the truth of the Word of God. The Holy Ghost works through the means of grace to open up our hard, sin-filled hearts, and He gives us a heart of flesh, and ears of faith to hear and believe only the Word of the Lord God. He keeps us in His Word by the work of the Holy Ghost, and keeps us in the one, true faith by this Word until He calls us out of this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not listen to the lies of the world, and our sinful flesh; let us not listen to the lies of the devil, but rather let us listen to the Truth of the Word of God. For the devil preaches the lie of following one's own heart, of doing whatever is pleasing to one's own evil lusts. But

the Lord God preaches into our ears the truth, that this way—the way of the world and our flesh—leads only to eternal death and destruction. The Lord God also preaches into our ears the truth that life and salvation are found only in Him. In Him and His Word—the Word of Truth—we have life and salvation. We have forgiveness of our sins, we have the promise of an eternal life in Heaven, we have the promise of rescue and salvation from our spiritual enemies in this life. Our spiritual enemies only want us to see death, but our loving Lord and Savior, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, desires that we never see death. Those who cling to Him in faith—who keep His Word—will never see death. Thanks be to our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, for His abundant grace and mercy. 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!