

Judica (*Passion Sunday*)

St. John 8:46-59

March 17th, 2024

Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Shall Never Taste of Death

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“The Jews said unto Him, ‘Now we know that Thou hast a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, “If a man keep My word, he shall never taste of death.” Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who died? and the prophets died: whom makest Thou Thyself?’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who through Thy Son, true God and our Redeemer, didst say: “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death,” we beseech Thee, bestow upon us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may give due honor to Thy Son, keep His Word, trust in it, comfort ourselves therewith in the hour of departure, and through death enter into everlasting life; for the sake of Jesus Christ, 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.

My dear friends, the enemies of the Lord God are always looking for an excuse to bring an accusation against His people. The Lord’s enemies are also our enemies. They are constantly seeking to accuse us of our sins. Because we sin daily and often, they are not wrong in their accusations. We do sin, and do deserve the Lord’s God’s eternal wrath and displeasure. The Lord’s enemies—our enemies—want us to hear the accusations of our sinfulness and be drowned in our despair over our sinfulness. Or, if we refuse to see and believe that we are poor, miserable sinners, the enemies of the Lord God—our enemies—desire that we become puffed up in our pride, in our own self-righteousness. Therefore, they will continue to accuse us of our sins until the day of our death. They will continue to accuse us so that we may despair or be filled with self-righteous pride and lose faith in the Lord God and end up in hell with our accusers.

The Jews in today’s Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John attempt to do the same thing with our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Our Lord says at the beginning of our pericope, “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” Of which sin are they accusing our Lord? Our Lord gives the answer in the next sentence: “If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?” The Jews were accusing the Lord + Jesus of being a liar. They were accusing Him of the sin of lying. When we sin and say that we do not we make ourselves out to be liars. This is why our self-righteous pride has no place among us. For we sin daily and much, and to say that we do not is nothing but a lie. But our Lord + Jesus is without sin. He is not a liar. He only speaks the truth. The truth He speaks is that “if a man keep my word, He shall never taste of death.”

The Jews, the enemies of the Lord + Jesus, accuse Him of telling a lie when He says this.

Abraham was dead, the prophets were dead, everybody that has ever been conceived and born on earth is dead. Everybody dies. Therefore, how can the Lord + Jesus say that if we keep His word we shall never taste of death. To the outward appearance—to the Jews accusing our Lord of being a liar—this cannot be a true thing. For can see with our very own eyes that while we are in the midst of life we are embraced in the arms of death. But our Lord + Jesus is not a liar. The sinless Son of God cannot ever be a liar. Therefore, what He says has to be true. If we keep His Word we will never taste of death. How can this be?

The Lord + Jesus gives us the answer, “He that is of God, heareth the words of God.” To keep His word is to hear and believe and take to heart His word. Those who hear His Word are of the Lord God. Those who keep His Word are of the Lord God. But how can such poor, miserable sinners such as you and I ever hope to keep the Word of God? For sin always pulls us in the opposite direction. And if that is the case then the accusations against us—that we deserve God’s wrath and displeasure—must be true.

And this is why this Gospel reading is preached into our ears on this first day of Passiontide. For through faith created in us by the Holy Ghost we learn to not trust in our own works. We learn that our sins have been paid for in full by the suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. His death has fully atoned for our sins and the sins of the whole world. His death and burial is the testament that we have already died and have been buried. This reality we bear through the washing and rebirth in the waters of Holy Baptism. In Holy Baptism we have been buried with the Christ in His death. As our Lord died and was buried, so too have we already died and been buried. And as He has risen from the dead, and walks about alive again, we too have raised again through the waters of Holy Baptism.

Moreover, this washing of rebirth has made us a new creation. We no longer stand naked in our sin and shame. We are now clothed with the righteousness of the Christ. We no longer bear our sinful works. We no longer bear our pride and self-righteousness. We no longer need to be consumed with despair over our sins. For we now wear our Lord’s righteousness. It is His works that bear. His works declare the truth that He is without sin. We, therefore, are also without sin for His righteousness is credited to us. His Blood is a testament that our sins have been paid for. His suffering and death are a testament that our sins have been paid for. They are a testament that we can no longer have an accusation brought against us.

When the Lord God’s enemies—our enemies—accuse us of sin our response should be the same that our Lord + Jesus gives to His accusers today: “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” We cannot be convicted of a sin that has already been paid for. We cannot be convicted of a sin whose penalty has already been paid. Our Lord + Jesus has already paid the penalty of our sin by His own suffering and death. He has paid for our sins by His crucifixion and death. And He has opened up the gates of Heaven by His resurrection from the dead.

This is the Word that He speaks to us. This is the promise that He makes to us through the means of grace. For in all the means which grant us faith and life, the promise of salvation is rooted in them. In all the means of grace the promise of forgiveness, life and salvation is gifted on account of our Lord’s works and merits. We are given these gifts whenever we gather in this place and receive them from the minister. When we hear this promise and appropriate as our own through faith we are keeping the Lord’s Word. He who hears the Word of God is of the Lord God. When we hear that we have life and salvation through the means of grace, when we hear that we have forgiveness and life through the works of our Lord + Jesus, and we believe that this gift is for us, we are in Christ, and He is in us.

Therefore, we shall never taste of death. For our Lord + Jesus has already suffered death for us. He has already endured the prison of the grave for us. He has already descended into Hell for us. We will never taste of death but will join our Lord and Savior in Heaven when we are called out of this

vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven. This is the truth that our Lord + Jesus speaks into our ears today. He cannot lie. Therefore, this promise is true for us. Even more, because we bear the robes of His righteousness, the accusations of the enemies of the Lord God, those who would seek our eternal destruction, cannot stand against us. For our Lord + Jesus speaks a new truth. He declares us to be clothed in His righteousness. He declares that no one can convict us of sin. He declares that no one can accuse of sin any longer. Therefore, we will never taste of death, but will live with Him forever in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us fix our eyes on the source of our salvation and life. Let us fix our eyes on the crucifix of our Lord's suffering and death. For His death speaks a new truth, a new reality, we are no longer trapped in sin and shame, but have been gifted with life and salvation forever and ever. Let us give thanks to our Lord + Jesus Who declares to us that we will never taste of death, for He has already paid the penalty of our death with His own. 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!