

Cantate
St. John 16:5-15
April 28th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Whither Goest Thou?

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“But now I go unto Him that sent me; and none of you asketh Me, ‘Whither goest thou?’ But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you. And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Send, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that He may rule and direct us according to Thy will, comfort us in all our temptations and afflictions, defend us from all error, and lead us into all truth, that we, being steadfast in the faith, may increase in love and in all good works, and in the end obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Dear friends, during the Easter season we get to hear the dialogue that our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, had with His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion. These are His last words of comfort and catechesis to His beloved disciples. The holy Apostle and Evangelist St. John, the one beloved of the Lord, records these words for us. Last week we heard our Lord say that in a little while they would no longer see Him. Certainly, He is preparing them for His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. But more, He is preparing them for His eventual ascension into Heaven. Today, we hear of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, Who our Lord will send after His ascension. And so, our Lord and the Church prepare us for the time when our Lord will not visibly be seen on Earth, and the time when the Holy Ghost will rule and guide the Church through the means of grace—by Word and Sacrament.

You may notice that today’s Gospel reading actually comes before last week’s Gospel reading in the Gospel of the Evangelist St. John. What that means is that the disciples were told of the coming of the Holy Ghost before they were told about the ascension. However, we in the Church receive these things in the order in which they happen during the Church year. Ascension comes before Pentecost—the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost—therefore we receive these texts in the order that we as the Church receive them in the Church’s year.

Our Lord on the night of His betrayal and arrest tells His disciples that He will be leaving them.

Now, this cannot but sadden the disciples who have spent the last three years with our Lord learning from Him and communing with Him. But then, our Lord says something strange to our ears, and it was probably strange to the ears of the Apostles, "It is expedient for you that I go away." How is it expedient for them that the Lord goes away? How is it expedient for us that the Lord is still away? When I hear these words, I think of the beloved pastor of a parish who has received a call, or has retired, or for some other reason must no longer be a part of the parish he has been called to, and he must leave. This would be an appropriate text for the final day a pastor spends with his parish before being called away.

Why? It certainly does not sound like it would be. But, it is expedient for the Apostles that our Lord goes away, and it is expedient for a parish of a beloved pastor, because our Lord has sent His Holy Ghost to the Church to provide for her wants and needs until the time when our Lord + Jesus Christ returns again on the Last Day. The Apostles would not have the Lord visibly present anymore, but they would have the Holy Ghost, Who would direct them to the means wherein our Lord and His grace are to be found. The Holy Ghost directs us to Holy Baptism; He directs us to the Lord's Supper; He directs us to the pure preaching of the Word; He directs us to the Absolution when our sins are confessed in repentance; and He directs us to the gathering together of the saints—to wherever two or three are gathered together in our Lord + Jesus' Name.

The Apostles would have an even greater advantage when our Lord had gone up into Heaven, for even though our Lord won for us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation on the tree of the holy cross, these gifts are only imparted and given to us through the means of grace by which the Holy Ghost works to create and sustain faith and life in us.

The same is true of the beloved pastor who must leave his beloved parish, even though He goes, they still have the Holy Ghost; they still have the Word of God, which the faithful pastor diligently taught them and comforted them in while he was present among them. In his absence it is expedient for them for they learn by his absence to trust in the Word and not the man who preached and administered it. The parish learns to trust in the Lord Who will send them another man of God to hand out to them the Holy Ghost given in the pure Word preached and the sacraments rightly administered. Our Lord will not leave them or forsake them. For He will always be with them whenever they gather together to hear His Word and receive His Blessed Sacraments. He remains with them in the same way that He did not leave His Apostles forsaken but sent them the Holy Ghost to convict the world of its sin, and teach the world about the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

For, it is by His righteousness alone that mankind is saved. This is what the Holy Ghost convinces us of, that by our own works we cannot have salvation; no one can. But we learn by His comforting Word and Sacraments that our Lord is the Way and means of our entire salvation. Therefore, it is expedient for the Church that the Lord would ascend into Heaven, for He has sent His Comforter, His Holy Ghost, to teach us that our sins are forgiven by our Lord, that we have salvation by our Lord alone, and that we have everlasting life by our Lord's obedience and death alone.

Therefore, we see why this Sunday in the Church's year is called, "Cantate." For as the first words of the Introit proclaim, we sing a new song, for our Lord has done marvelous things. He suffered for us, taking our place on the tree of punishment and shame. And He fulfilled the Law perfectly for us because we were unable to do it ourselves. Therefore, the Church sings a new song today and every day; not the song of gloom and sadness of those in this world trapped in their sins, and who see in death not the reward of eternal life, but only an end. No, we sing a new song of hope. Hope that our Lord will someday return and restore this world to the glory that it possessed when He first created it.

And we sing a new song, for the Holy Ghost has put it upon our lips by His working in our hearts to drive out that which is evil, and create and restore to us the righteousness that our Lord + Jesus Christ won for us on the tree of the holy Cross. Therefore, my dear friends, let us sing a new song, and

rejoice that our Lord has given us the great advantage of receiving the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! 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!