

The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. John 4:46b-54
October 20th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Himself Believed, and His Whole House

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, saying, that his son lived. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’ So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, ‘Thy son liveth:’ and himself believed, and his whole house.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, by Thy Son, hast promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life: we beseech Thee so to rule and govern our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek help from Him, and by a true and lively faith in Thy Word obtain the same; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

My dear friends, we are justified by faith. That means that by faith we are declared righteous by the Lord God. To be righteous in the Lord God’s eyes means that we are no longer estranged from Him. We are His children. He is our Father. He loves us and we in turn love Him back. Through faith in the Lord God, and in His beloved Son Who redeemed us from sin and death, we have all the gifts that His Son won for us on the tree of the holy cross. It is these gifts which we gladly and willingly receive in the blessed means of grace in His holy Christian and Apostolic Church. Through faith, my dear friends, we have all that is good, and nothing that is bad or evil.

This is why, my dear friends, the devil lurks around us like a roaring lion. It is why he lies in wait for us like a cobra, or adder. He seeks our demise. He desires our eternal destruction. As St. Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus our battle in this life is not one of flesh and blood. We are not out here against the devil with fists and man-made weapons. No, my friends, our battle is “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Our true battle in this life is not against any man that might do us physical or emotional harm, but against those spiritual beings that wish to lead us down the pathway to our eternal destruction in Hell.

They do this by using all of their evil arts to shatter and destroy our faith. For faith is credited to us as righteousness. Even as it was said of Abraham, who is called the father of faith. For He believed the Word of the Lord God and it was credited to him as righteousness. When we believe the Word of God; when we believe the promises declared to us in the Word of God, that we have salvation through

the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone, and His works and merits, we are declared righteous through this faith. This is why we say that faith justifies, for faith makes us righteous in the Lord God's eyes. Through faith we are no different than Abraham who believed on the Lord God and left his home and his false gods and traveled into a strange and foreign country to dwell there and receive it as an inheritance from the Lord God. Through faith Abraham believed that in his very old age, being a hundred years old, he would produce an heir from his own loins. Through his seed would come the Savior of all mankind, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ of the Lord. Through faith in Him we have salvation from all our enemies.

This is why the evil powers and principalities of this life seek to shake and destroy our faith. For they do not want us to enjoy the gifts the heavenly Father so freely gives to all those who cling to Him in faith. They also want to destroy our faith, because as King Solomon wrote in the Book of Proverbs, "The path of righteousness glistens like a light that issues forth and shines throughout the whole day." The "path of righteousness" is through faith in the Lord God. Our faith shines as a path to righteousness. Others see our faith and it leads them into faith and trust in the Lord God, and in His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord + Jesus. Faith leads to more faith. Our faith teaches others to cling in faith to the Lord God. This is why the devil, and his evil angels seek to destroy faith not only in us, but also in every person on earth.

Consider then the certain nobleman from the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John. It is love for his son that drives him to the Lord + Jesus for help. He has barely enough faith to come to the Lord + Jesus. He does not yet fully believe the power that the Lord + Jesus possesses. He believes the Lord must come down to where his son is in order to heal him. "Come down ere my son dies," he says. As it is printed on the cover of the bulletin. The Lord + Jesus states it plainly, he will not believe unless he sees signs and wonders. As it is with many. They need to see signs in order to confirm the works of the Lord.

To this certain nobleman's credit, when the Lord + Jesus tells him to "Go thy way; thy son liveth," he believes the word of the Lord + Jesus. His belief was confirmed by the healing of his son, at the very hour in which the word of the Lord + Jesus had been spoken. This confirmed the man's faith. It made it a stronger, deeper faith; an unshakeable faith. And as King Solomon wrote, "The path of righteousness glistens like a light that issues forth and shines throughout the whole day." His faith in the Lord + Jesus spread to his whole household so that St. John records, "Himself believed, and his whole house."

This Gospel reading shows us the power of faith. It shows us just how great of a weapon it is against the powers of evil and darkness in this world. St. Paul tells the Ephesians that faith is a shield. It is a strong defense against the flaming arrows of the devil and his minions. This now the point in most sermons on this text where the minister starts telling everyone to put on the whole armor of the Lord God; all those things recorded by St. Paul to the Church at Ephesus from our Epistle reading. However, most of those sermons put the onus on us. We have to wear the armor; we have to do the fighting. Does that sound very "Lutheran" to you? Does it sound like the true Gospel that we place the maintenance of our salvation in our own hands?

So then, my dear friends, what is the answer? How do we reconcile what St. Paul writes to the Ephesians with what we believe, teach, and confess? Well, we simply go back to the beginning of the Epistle for today. We listen to the words of the Collect for the Day. For St. Paul does not begin with our wearing of the armor of the Lord God. He begins with the Lord God Himself. He says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." In other words, cling to the Lord God in faith and His power and might against the devil, and by faith in Him and His strength, one will be wearing the whole armor of the Lord God. Just as we prayed in the Collect of the Day that the Lord would give us protection from our adversaries.

It is the Lord God Who creates faith and life in us by His Word. He created faith in the certain nobleman by declaring to him that his son liveth, and the man upon hearing that his son liveth, he and his whole household believed. The sign of the healing confirmed the faith already begun in the nobleman by the Lord's Word. We also have signs and wonders that confirm our faith. Although, sadly, many in this world consider these signs and wonders as little or no significance. To what signs and wonders am I referring? The same signs and wonders that we receive and participate in whenever we gather together in this place for worship.

The means of grace are given to us to confirm our faith. The world sees water, and we see Holy Baptism; water connected to the Lord God's Word, which declares that our sins have been washed free. The world sees a wooden box, we see a font. The place, or a place similar to it, wherein we were brought into the holy Christian and Apostolic Church. We see the place where we were first gifted by the Holy Ghost with faith and life. Through the water and the Word—through Holy Baptism—we now have a defense against the slings and arrows of the devil and his horde. We have the sign of the holy cross, which we can make over our heads as a reminder that we are now under the Almighty Father's heavenly protection. The devil can harm us none.

The same is true of the Lord's Supper. The world sees bread and wine. But we see the sign and wonder of the Lord + Jesus. He declares to us by His Word that this bread and this wine is indeed the true and substantial Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. This Body and Blood is given to us as a pledge that our sins are forgiven, that we are true members of the holy Christian and Apostolic Church, that while we receive it here on earth, the saints in Heaven are joining us. The whole Christian and Apostolic Church of both heaven and earth are at this altar worshiping the Savior of the whole world.

For it is He alone whose righteousness we bear through faith. It is through Him alone by which we are justified. He was raised again as proof of our justification. As He lives, so live we and all the saints. He is the One Who defeated the devil and his host. He defeated once and for all the powers, the principalities, the world-rulers of darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places, so that they no longer occupy any place where the Word of the Lord God is. He is our Rock and Fortress, our Strong Defence against the powers of darkness. For He is the Stronger Man that has thoroughly defeated the strong man on the tree of the holy cross. In Him we can thoroughly place our trust, for He has valiantly fought for us, and continues to do so whenever He sends to us His Holy Ghost by the means of grace.

For by the means of grace we are gifted with faith. By faith we are justified and declared righteous. By faith in the Lord + Jesus we have put on the whole armor of the Lord God, but we trust not in our own selves or our own protections, but we trust in the Lord, and the strength of His might. For He will not only gift us with faith, but strengthen that faith so that it becomes a light shining the way to righteousness.

Therefore, my dear friends, cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus, and by it, others will see your faith and will also learn to cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. And also, do not neglect to continue to come to this holy house, for it is here where the Lord + Jesus strengthens our faith by the signs and wonders of His Blessed Word and Sacraments. For by such faith in the Lord + Jesus are we justified by the Lord God heavenly Father, and declared to be members of the holy Christian and Apostolic Church. 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!