

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 9:1-8
October 6th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Jesus Seeing Their Faith

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, ‘Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven.’”

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, it is most certainly true that we are justified by faith. The kingdom of the Christ is made up of all those who are justified, that is, made right with the Lord God. To be made right with the Lord God means that there is no longer a breach between man and the Lord God on account of sins and transgressions. Our iniquities and trespasses no longer hinder us from approaching the Lord God, our heavenly Father. Justification is not accomplished through anything that we do. We cannot good work our way into being made right with the Lord God. We cannot base our salvation upon our works because the Lord God requires perfect works; perfect obedience to His Law and His will. To trust in our works is to turn salvation on its head.

For, the kingdom of the Christ is established by faith, but not faith in what we do, or say, or think. We should never put our faith in what we can do to accomplish salvation. For, we can do nothing to accomplish our salvation. Faith must cling to something outside of ourselves. We are justified by faith in the Christ; in His works and merits. For what we cannot do, He can and has done for us. He is the One Who can forgive sins. He is the One Who has authority to forgive the sins of mankind. For, He is not only the One Who perfectly fulfilled the whole Law and will of the Lord God, but is also the One Who ransomed His life for ours on the tree of the holy cross. He suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried all so that He could pay the penalty of our sins and transgressions. He accomplishes our salvation by His works and merits. Only by His works and merits can we be saved.

It is His works and merits to which we cling to in faith and are justified. It is by what He does for us that we are made right with the Lord God. It is upon our faith in the Christ by which the kingdom of the Christ is established. For faith places all that is necessary for salvation in the Christ alone. Faith places all things necessary for us to be justified, that is, made right with the Lord God, solely into the hands of the Christ. Salvation is His work. For it is by Him that we receive the forgiveness of our sins.

Case in point is given to us in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew.

We are presented today with men whose faith is so great in the Christ, that they open up a panel in the roof of the house where the Lord + Jesus is staying, in order to let down their friend sick with the palsy before the Lord + Jesus. St. Matthew's Gospel does not share the part about opening up of the roof. Rather, he focuses our attention on faith and forgiveness. This man's sins are forgiven on account of his faith.

When the Lord + Jesus saw their faith, He forgives the sins of the man sick with the palsy. There is some debate among theologians about the word "their" in today's pericope. Does "their" refer to the men who brought the man sick of the palsy before the Lord alone, or does "their" also include the man who is dangled before the Lord + Jesus. In the end, such discussions are irrelevant, because the focus should not be on "them," but on the Lord + Jesus. For it is He alone Who can forgive this man his sins.

Our Lord + Jesus shows His authority over sin and death, over pain and suffering, not by healing this man first, but by declaring to him that his sins were forgiven. "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." This man sick of the palsy by all outward signs certainly did not show that his greatest need at that moment was the forgiveness of his sins. His friends did not open up a hole in the roof of the house where the Lord + Jesus was, we can be certain, because this man desperately needed the forgiveness of sins. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew tells us exactly what ails this man. He is sick with the palsy, meaning he was paralyzed. He could not use his hands or feet. He was completely helpless.

And is this not how we are brought to the Lord + Jesus. When we come to the font, we are not able to save ourselves. We are not the ones baptizing. We are not the ones working a good work in us. It is the Lord God Who by the Word connected to the element of water, washes away our sins, and grants us forgiveness, life, and salvation. As was the case for many of us, we were even brought when we could not even bring ourselves. We were brought as infants, unable to either walk or talk. Just like this man sick of the palsy had to be brought by his friends, we were brought to the font by our friends; our parents and sponsors.

But even if we were able to bring ourselves to the font, even if this man sick of the palsy was not so, but could approach the Lord + Jesus by himself, neither he nor we could heal ourselves of our greatest malady. For we came to the font for healing, because we could not heal ourselves. We needed the forgiveness of our sins. This man sick of the palsy by all outward signs needed to be healed of his palsy. This is what we would say is the ailment of this man. But our Lord + Jesus knows our hearts and minds. He sees our true malady. It is sin. For sin leads to death. Sin has destroyed the bond between man and the Lord God.

Faith looks to the Lord + Jesus first and foremost for this healing, the healing between us and the Lord God. This is why faith justifies, for faith looks to the Lord God to heal us of our greatest malady. Faith looks to the Lord God that He might heal of the malady that truly paralyses us: sin and death. For we cannot rescue ourselves from sin and death. We cannot stop ourselves from sinning. Even if we are successful for a time at obeying the Law and will of the Lord God, and do all those things that Christians ought to do, not only will we eventually fail, but even when we are successful at being "good Christians" we are still plagued by the original sin which we inherited from Adam and Eve, our first parents. This sin inheres in us, that is, it clings to our flesh like a burr on a dress.

Therefore, we need to be healed of our sins by the Lord + Jesus. He forgives us our sins on account of our faith. By faith we are justified. For faith clings to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits which He accomplished for us as one of us. Only He has the authority to forgive sins, because only He has perfectly fulfilled the whole Law and will of the Lord God, and only He has paid the penalty of our sins in His flesh on the tree of the holy cross.

This is why we can look at the crucifixion depicted on our crucifixes and know that by His death we are healed. This is why we can make the sign of the cross whenever we hear the Name that was placed upon us in Holy Baptism, the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and know that our sins are forgiven. That He forgave our sins through the washing of the Word of the Lord God. This is why when we come to receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine, we know that we are receiving the forgiveness of sins. For, just as in Holy Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, we are brought back to the sacrifice of our Lord + Jesus upon the tree of the holy cross.

It is to this suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus to which we cling to in faith, for by it we know that our sins have been paid for. By faith in the suffering and death of the Lord, we know that we are justified, that is, made right with the Lord God. It is upon this faith in the works and merits of the Christ that the kingdom of the Christ finds its foundation. Faith in the Christ establishes the kingdom of the Christ. In this kingdom, we no longer look to our own works and keeping of the Law, for we know that we fail often and daily. We are after all poor, miserable sinners, even as we confessed a few moments ago.

There will be those who will scoff at us because we believe this; that we believe that only through faith in the Christ and His works and merits are we saved. They want to hang onto some authority within themselves to affect their salvation. But like the man sick with the palsy who was unable to even approach the Lord let alone heal himself, we do not possess any authority when it comes to our salvation. Salvation is only accomplished through the works and merits of the Christ. This was true also of certain of the scribes who scoffed at the Lord + Jesus because He declared to this man that his sins were forgiven. Who can forgive sins but the Lord God?

This is why our Lord + Jesus also shows His authority over sin and death by healing this man's physical malady. The healing is a sign of His authority to forgive sins. Our Lord + Jesus has even given this authority to forgive sins to the Church. For through the means of grace, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the Holy Absolution, the Church forgives our sins. The Church strengthens the faith in us, which was gifted to us by the Holy Ghost through His work in the Church, by the means of grace. When through the Word and Sacraments it is declared to us that our sins are forgiven, we cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus, and are justified. When we hear the same words that this man sick of the palsy heard, "Son be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven" we are justified, because at that moment we are not looking inside ourselves and thinking about how we forgave ourselves, but rather we are looking at the Christ, and His innocent suffering and death on our behalf. We are looking at what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. He has won forgiveness for us on the cross, and declared that forgiveness to us through the declaration of forgiveness.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us take comfort in the declaration that our sins are forgiven. For by this proclamation that we are forgiven, we are strengthened in our faith towards the Lord + Jesus, and it is this faith, which trusting in the Lord + Jesus, makes us justified with the Lord God. For by our justification, by our clinging in faith to the Lord + Jesus, the kingdom of the Christ is established. And in this kingdom, the Lord + Jesus gives us all that we need—all that is necessary—for our salvation. In this we can glorify the Lord God, because He has given authority to the Christ to forgive us of all our sins. 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!