

The Festival of St. Martin of Tours, Bishop and Confessor
St. Luke 11:33-36
November 11th, 2024
All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Lamp with Its Bright Shining

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light.”

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, today we celebrate the Festival of St. Martin of Tours, Bishop and Confessor. This is the saint for whom Martin Luther was named. Martin Luther was born on November 10th, 1483, and he was baptized and named the next day, today, November 11th, 1483. Since it was the festival of St. Martin of Tours, his parents named him for this great saint. Who then is St. Martin of Tours? We know from the rest of the title of this festival day that he was a bishop and a confessor, but what does that mean? Here are some historical facts about St. Martin of Tours, Bishop and Confessor.

Most of this information is from Sulpicius Severus, who was a contemporary of St. Martin of Tours, also sometimes referred to as St. Martin the Merciful. Sulpicius Severus who knew him personally wrote a hagiography—a writing about a particular saint—that was called “Life of St. Martin.” St. Martin lived in the 4th century. He was born either in 316, or 336 (reports differ) and he died on November 8th, 397. He was born in Pannonia, which is in modern day Hungary. And was raised in Northern Italy, where his father had been granted land for his military service. He converted to Christianity at the young age of ten, against his parent’s wishes. Following in his father’s footsteps, who was a senior officer—a tribune—he served in the Roman calvary, which is why the celebration of his festival annually on Veterans’ Day is appropriate. Given where he was stationed (in Milan and Trier) it is most likely that he served as part of the elite personal guard of the emperor. This would have been Constantine II and later Julian.

He remained a soldier for at least two years after his baptism. It was when he was serving under the anti-Christian emperor, Julian, that He started having regrets about accepting pay from someone who hated what he believed. He decided that he would rather leave the military and serve a greater Master, the Lord + Jesus Christ. Noteworthy it is that he was serving in Worms, Germany at the time. He told Julian, “I am the soldier of Christ: it is not lawful for me to fight.” He was charged with cowardice and jailed, but in response to the charge, he volunteered to go unarmed to the front of the troops. His superiors planned to take him up on the offer, but before they could, the invaders sued for peace, the battle never occurred, and Martin was released from military service. After he left the military, he

became a disciple of St. Hilary of Poitiers in 361 AD. Under St. Hilary of Poitiers tutelage, he founded the Abbey in Ligugé, France. He was then consecrated as the third bishop of the town of Tours, France, also referred to as Caesarodunum, in 371 AD. This is why he is referred to as a bishop.

St. Martin of Tours is referred to as a confessor, because he held to the orthodox teaching of the Christian Church, opposing the false teachings of the Arians, which had invaded the imperial court. St. Hilary of Poitiers, his teacher, was exiled from Poitiers, and St. Martin returned to Italy and then returned into his home country of Pannonia. Along the way he converted others to the Christian faith. He converted his mother to the Christian faith, but his father he could not convert. While in the Northern Italy region of Illyricium, he zealously opposed the Arians in that region. The Arian archbishop of Milan, Auxentius, had him publicly whipped and forced him to leave. He would eventually end up in exile with his teacher, St. Hilary of Poitiers. When St. Hilary was restored to his bishopric in 361, St. Martin followed him.

St. Martin of Tours was reluctant to be made bishop. He was actually brought to Tours from Ligugé by the ruse of coming to minister to a sick person. When he found out they wanted to make him a bishop, he hid in a barn full of geese, but their quacking gave him away. St. Martin as a bishop set up a system where he would visit every parish in his diocese once a year. He was able to expand his diocese further into parts of France. He died in Gaul in 397 AD and is buried in a small grove of trees to the west of Tours, France.

St. Martin of Tours is best known for the legend that is depicted in the image on the front of the bulletin cover. According to legend, while he was a soldier, he saw a poor beggar dressed only in rags in the dead of winter. St. Martin cut off a piece of his own robe and gave it to the man to keep him warm. This exemplifies the life that St. Martin lived. He lived a life where the Light of the world, the Lord + Jesus, shown through him. In his teachings and in his life, he held fast to the orthodox teachings of the Lord + Jesus.

As our Lord says in the Gospel reading for today from the Evangelist St. Luke, "If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light." We have no light of ourselves. On account of sin, we are filled with darkness. But by faith we are in Christ, and if we are in Christ, then He is in us. We dwell with Christ, just as He dwells with us. Therefore, His light shines in our dark hearts, and we are illumined with His light. This light shines out of our hearts and reveals that all those who cling to Him in faith have forgiveness of sins. The light reveals that we have been redeemed by the Lord + Jesus. His death has given us life, and we are a new creation formed by the Holy Ghost.

The light that now dwells in us by the work of the Lord God shines in our life and our teachings. We cling to the truth of His Word, and we desire to live lives according to His Ten Commandments. The same is true of St. Martin of Tours. He was faithful to the Word of the Lord God, opposing the Arians, and clinging to the orthodox teachings of the Christian Church. Not only that, but he also lived what we would call a Christian life. He not only did good deeds, like giving a part of his cloak to a poor beggar, but he also shared his hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation with all those who would listen. He converted his mother, and several others.

He also faced the persecution, the attacks from those who still dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, just as we do as Christians in our time and day. He was whipped, and exiled. He was jailed and would have been sent to the front lines without armor or weapons, if the enemy had not sued for peace before his accusers could enact his punishment. He also had to endure the persecutions from his own family. Both of his parents were opposed to him converting to Christianity, even though it had just become legal in 313, just a few years before his birth. His mother would eventually hear and rejoice in and believe the Gospel of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, but his father would continue to refuse to

believe. But as many as saw the light of the Christ in him would come to trust in the Lord + Jesus themselves.

This is why, my dear friends, we also let that light of the Christ to shine through us, both in our teachings, that is, sharing what we believe with those who still sit in darkness and the shadow of death—in unbelief. It is why we live our lives according to the Ten Commandments, and when we fail, we humbly confess our sins, and beg the Lord God's grace and mercy. For, those who see the light of the Christ in us, who hear what we believe, and see how we live, may also come to the full knowledge of salvation found in the Christ alone. We pray that they may see the same light that we have seen, and may come to rejoice in the Lord + Jesus as the One, True Savior of mankind, especially of them that believe.

It is for this reason, my dear friends, that celebrate on this day the saint for whom Martin Luther was named for on this day. It was St. Martin of Tours, Bishop and Confessor, who showed the light of the Christ to all those who saw his works and listened to his teachings, who sets a good example to us of what faith in us should be. Let us give thanks this day for such saints. For just as the light of the Christ shown through them, it will also show forth from us, so that everyone who sees that light may know the True Light, the Light of the world, Who has redeemed this world out of death and darkness, and brought into life and light. 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 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!