

Judica (*Passion Sunday*)

St. John 8:46-59

April 6th, 2025

St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC

Athens, GA

Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC

Ormond Beach, FL

All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC

Pawleys Island, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Before Abraham Was Born, I AM

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“The Jews therefore said unto Him, ‘Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was born, I AM.’”

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, throughout the season of Lent we have seen our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, battling the powers of the devil and his horde. He faced the devil himself on Invocavit, the First Sunday in Lent, when He was tempted in the wilderness by the devil. On Reminiscere Sunday, the Second Sunday in Lent, He cast out the demon of the daughter of the Canaanitish woman, who was grievously vexed by the demon, after her mother, the Canaanitish woman of Syro-Phoenicia begged Him in her strong faith to do what she asked. He described how powerful Satan is on Oculi Sunday, the Third Sunday in Lent, when He described him as a strong man who guarded his possessions with great care, and did not suffer there to be any division in his kingdom. Last Sunday, on Laetare, the Fourth Sunday in Lent, we received a refreshing break from the devil’s attack as we witnessed how gracious and compassionate our Lord is in giving us all that we need to support this body and life.

Today, we hear about our greatest battle against the devil and his horde. The battle which instills fear and trembling into many people: the battle with death. The devil wants us to despair when we consider death. He wants us to lose all faith and hope in the Lord + Jesus. This is why our Lord strengthens our faith today in the words of the Gospel from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John. He is the Lord Who is eternal. He has existed before Abraham was born. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is eternal. That He is eternal, that He was the I AM before the birth of Abraham, proves

that He is the Lord God. He is the Son of God come down from Heaven Who has taken upon Himself our flesh so that He might do the will of His heavenly Father; that He might perfectly fulfill the Law and will of the Lord God, and make payment for our transgressions by offering up His life as a sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

This is why the Jews in today's Gospel reading reject Him. They want to claim themselves to be children of God on account of their ancestor Abraham. But they lack the one thing that made Abraham justified in the sight of the Lord God, the one thing that made Abraham righteous, they lack true faith. They trusted in their lineage, but they did not really know the Lord God. The Lord + Jesus has been preaching the truth; He has been preaching the pure Gospel. The Gospel is the discourse on the Christ. All that He has done for us poor, miserable sinners to win life and salvation for us. Our Lord has been preaching about Himself, how He is the only Savior of the world. The Jews rejected Him for they do not want to have Him for their Messiah. The Jews of today still reject the Lord + Jesus as the Messiah.

In our Gospel from St. John our Lord + Jesus shows how He is indeed the Messiah. He does it with a discussion about death. Or more precisely, about life. For He teaches us that those who believe on Him, those who keep His Word, will never taste of death. Death is our greatest enemy. It is an enemy to which we will all succumb. But there is a difference between those who die in the faith and the death of an unbeliever. The Jews in the pericope for today show us this. For when our Lord speaks about not tasting of death, they immediately assume only a natural death. Every person on Earth will suffer a natural death. But death for an unbeliever is wrought with torment, pain, and anxiety. For they see the futility and senselessness of death. The unbeliever only sees an end.

This is what the Jews in the Gospel of St. John say. Abraham was dead. The prophets were dead. Everybody who ever lived is dead. Therefore, the final fate of everyone is death. What a hopeless belief!

However, this is not what our Lord is talking about when He says that those who keep His Word, that those who cling to Him in faith will never taste death. He is talking about the eternal death. The second death described in the Book of Revelation. We are all conceived and born in sin. Therefore, we are all born in death. Those who remain unbelievers will never see life. They will die the second death, the eternal death, after the natural death. We, however, have been baptized into the death of the Christ. Just as He died and rose again on the Last Day. We too will be raised again on the Last Day. Our bodies will be separated from our souls and be placed in the ground, but our souls will immediately be with the Lord God. We will remain that way until the Last Day when we will receive new and glorious bodies. Our Lord will raise us up again on the Last Day to live with Him and all the saints and angels forever and ever.

This is what our Lord + Jesus tells us today in the Gospel reading. For He says that Abraham rejoiced to see His day. Abraham is not dead! The prophets are not dead! They are alive in Heaven. All those who have died in the faith are in Heaven. For the true Triune Lord God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. This is why unlike the unbelievers who fear death we need not fear death. The faithless try to claim that death holds no fear for them because they believe there is nothing after death. But their claims are not supported by their response to death. They weep and wail, and despair, at the prospect of their own death, and whenever someone they care about dies. They have no hope to support them at their funerals.

This is why they try to gloss over death as much as possible at a funeral. They call it a "celebration of life." As if remembering a person's works in this life will offer some comfort as they face the reality of their own death. Remembering someone in one's heart is not going to change their eternal reality: that they are eternally lost and condemned in Hell. There is not true comfort in a person's works, even if they be praiseworthy in the eyes of the world. For ultimately, they know deep down that death

holds eternal horrors for them. Even if they do not want to admit it, like the Jews in the Gospel reading for today.

Satan and his horde want us to despair like the rest of world at the realization of our death, and at the death of our loved ones. For without hope of an eternal life, without the hope that all those who died in the faith live on in Heaven, we will despair like the world. For the Christian we view death as sleep. We peacefully enter into it, for we know that our trials and travails of this life are finally over. We can leave this evil world behind and be with our Lord and Savior, and all the saints and angels in Heaven forever and ever.

For this is why the Lenten season ends with this Passion Sunday, with *Judica*. The Sunday of judgment. But it is not our judgment that takes place on this day. It is the judgment that the Father extends upon His Beloved Son Who endured the cross and shame, and Who died innocently on our behalf. Our Lord is judged as being righteous and unworthy of death. So that He is raised again on the third day. All those who keep the Lord's word, that is, all those who believe on Him, are in Christ and Christ is in them. We have been granted this faith, this belief, through the waters of Holy Baptism. We have been granted this faith through the pure preaching of the Gospel. And we receive the renewing and strengthening of this faith when we come to this holy altar and receive our Lord's true and substantial Body and Blood in, with, and under, bread and wine for the remission of our sins.

For at this altar, we do not simply commune with one another. It is not just all those who are physically here and now, but we commune with angels and archangels, and all the company of Heaven. The gates of Heaven are opened, and our Lord + Jesus comes down from Heaven to be with us in His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. And the whole host of Heaven joins us here at this altar. For our Lord + Jesus is not a God of the dead, but of the living. All those who have gone before us in the faith are still living. They live forever and ever. When we cast off this mortal coil, we too will join them eternally in Heaven. For we cling in faith to the Lord of life and death. We keep His Word, by trusting that what He has promised is true and correct.

Therefore, rejoice my dear friends, because on account of the faith created in us by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, we will never see, nor taste of death. For we who are full of sins and transgressions; we who have been conceived and born in sin and death, have a Lord and Savior Who no one can convict of sin. Neither the devil, the world, nor the Jews in our Lord's time, can produce an accusation against Him. He is the perfect, sinless, and spotless Lamb of the Lord God Who offered Himself upon the tree of the holy cross for the sins of the whole world. Through Holy Baptism, we have put on His righteousness, so that we no longer are credited with the sin with which we were born.

We have already died to sin. Therefore, death can harm us none. We have already died and been buried with the Christ. We have also been raised again in the waters of Holy Baptism to live before the Lord God as a new creation. Therefore, death cannot harm us for we already are alive in Christ + Jesus. With Him we will live for all eternity. We need not fear death at all. For death holds for us the promise of all the eternal rewards which our Lord + Jesus has won for us by His death. He died that we may never see nor taste of death, but may live forever and ever with Him and all the company of Heaven. He has been judged for us, so that we may live with Him forever. He has battled the devil and his horde for us, so that He may give us the victory of sin and death.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us enter into this Passiontide, this time which we reflect upon our Lord's suffering and death with the hope that our Lord has secured for us. For He has won for us the right to be called children of the Lord God. And as Abraham rejoiced to see His day, we too will rejoice to see the day of our Lord's suffering and death. For He suffers and dies to atone for our sins, so that by His innocent suffering and death, He might raise up Himself and all those who cling to Him in faith.

May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. 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!