

Midweek Lenten Vespers #1  
St. Luke 22:24-32  
February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

I Am in the Midst of You

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

**Sermon Text:**

“For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as He that serveth.”

**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, you have often heard me say that Lent is in two parts (three if you count the Triduum—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday—as a separate part). The two parts of Lent involve upon what we focus. The first part of Lent from the First Day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, until the Fourth Sunday in Lent—Laetare—our focus in on the Law and the Ten Commandments. Specifically, we focus on our breaking of the Commandments. We focus upon our sins, and what leads our dear Lord to offer up His life as a ransom for ours. The second part of Lent, which is often called Passiontide, and begins with Passion Sunday, that is, Judica Sunday, focuses (as the name implies) upon the Passion of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. This is why it is called Passiontide, because our focus is upon our Lord’s Passion. It is not so-called because the Passions from the four Gospels are read, but because we turn our attention to the cross of our Lord + Jesus.

But we will have to wait for Passiontide for that, although in our Midweek Lenten Vespers hymnody, we will sing many of those great Lutheran Lenten hymns. Tonight, our focus is upon the Ten Commandments and our failure to keep them. This is why we are presented with this Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke about the sin of the Apostles desiring to be the best one in the group. There is often a connection in the daily readings for the week to the Gospel from the previous Sunday. This past Sunday we heard of our Lord’s temptation in the wilderness by the devil. And that is the connection between that Gospel on Sunday and tonight’s Gospel from St. Luke.

The devil tempts mankind in many and various ways. He knows our weaknesses, and exploits them. The weakness of the Apostles was pride and empty honor. They are arguing over who of them is the greatest. It should be pointed out that this argument takes place on the night of our Lord’s arrest and trial. This argument occurs in the Upper Room where our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion. It was custom that when the guests arrived that a servant would wash the feet of the guests. But the Apostles are alone in the Upper Room with our Lord + Jesus; there is no servant to wash the disciples’ feet. This is what prompts the argument. Who is going to be doing the washing of feet? We will hear more about this on Maundy Thursday, when we hear the Gospel from St. John,

chapter thirteen, where our Lord + Jesus washes the feet of His Apostles.

In that Gospel reading He ends the argument by doing the washing of feet Himself. Here in this Gospel from St. Luke the Apostles argue over who is the greatest, and who is the least. That is, who should be doing the foot-washing, and whose feet should be washed. Those who thought they were greater, did not think it wrong to demand that those who they deemed lesser, should be doing the foot washing. This is the temptation of those who are filled with pride and view themselves better than their fellow disciples. They do not want to relinquish their perceived power to those they view as lesser. The same is true of those of the second rank. Pride also fills them, for they do not want to yield to those of the first rank. In other words, no one wanted to be the servant. Everyone wanted someone else to be the servant, and they argued about who among them was the greatest.

This is how the devil tempts mankind. His net of sin is spread everywhere, and he catches mankind in his traps in many and various ways. He uses our weaknesses against us. The Apostles were still under the impression that our Lord + Jesus would be establishing an earthly kingdom. They are already arguing about who gets what position. And even though this argument recorded for us by St. Luke occurs on the night of our Lord's betrayal, this is not the first time this argument happens among them. This is not the first time our Lord + Jesus has to correct their thinking. This is how we know that this is one of their weaknesses that the devil exploits to lead them into temptation, because it has happened before.

The same is true of us. We often fall victim to the same sins over and over again. Why? Because the devil knows our weaknesses and exploits them. This is why St. Paul, the Apostle, writes in his Epistles to be on guard; to watch and pray. The Lord + Jesus says the same thing: that we should be on guard from the devil; that we should watch and pray, as we do in the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation.

St. Peter must have been one of the ones setting himself over and above his fellow disciples, for our Lord + Jesus points him out specifically. Satan had asked to sift St. Peter like wheat. But our Lord + Jesus prays that St. Peter's faith may not fail, as it would with Judas Iscariot, who had remorse over his betrayal, but without faith despaired to his eternal ruin. St. Peter's faith is shaken by his sin, but it does not fail. In his triumphing over his weakness—in enduring temptation, failure at resisting temptation, and then through humble contrition and faith—he can strengthen his brethren. He can teach them to be on guard and watch and pray.

He had the opportunity to watch and pray. Indeed, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when our Lord + Jesus prays to His heavenly Father, the Apostles should have been praying to resist the temptations of the devil. The Lord chastises them for this on that night. Their eyes were heavy though and they fell asleep. St. Peter would later deny the Lord three times before the cock crowed, and he would go out and weep bitterly because he had transgressed the Lord.

The devil had asked to sift St. Peter as wheat, but even in his sorrow his faith does not fail. Even having fallen into sin, having not been able to resist the temptation to deny the Lord + Jesus, he still clung in faith to the Lord's grace and mercy. Then he would learn from experience Who the greatest was. It was the Lord + Jesus. And our Lord + Jesus tells His Apostles on this night that to be the greatest is to be a servant. That is, that one must shed their pride and seeking after empty honor. For the greatest of them serves in the most humble of ways. He offers up His life as a ransom for mankind. He dies for those who disown Him, for those who treat Him with contempt and distaste. Because of this kind of love, His Apostles clung to Him in faith until their deaths. Many who heard their testimony believed on the Lord + Jesus, too.

We also cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. For we also fall often to temptation. The devil knows

our weaknesses and exploits them. We often find ourselves committing the same sins over and over again, because our spiritual enemies know how we can easily become their prey. This is why we need to continuously be on our guard and pray. We must continue to read and study God's Word. For by it the Holy Ghost strengthens in faith toward our Lord and Redeemer. He will teach us to know that by our sins our Lord was nailed to the tree of the holy cross. It was our transgressions that led to His suffering and death. But it was because as a Lamb He went uncomplaining forth, because we behold Him upon the tree, we can know for certainty that our sins have been paid for in full. For He is in the midst of us as our Redeemer and Savior. He has perfectly fulfilled all that was necessary for our salvation, and He has established by His death an eternal kingdom in heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, when we fail in temptation, as the Apostles did in arguing about who was the greatest, and as St. Peter did in denying our Lord + Jesus three times, let us humbly confess our sins and seek redemption from our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. For He has come to be our servant. He has come to lead us into His eternal kingdom in heaven. There we reign with Him for all eternity, if we remain faithful unto death. Let us therefore cling to Him in faith, especially when we fall into temptation, for of ourselves we can have no salvation, but in Him we can have the forgiveness of all our sins, and where there is forgiveness there is also eternal life and salvation in Him. In temptation let us look to Him and He will deliver us from all our transgressions. 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!*