



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21B)

*In the Body of Christ Truth and Love  
work together for peace!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in James 5, 13-20:

- <sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.
  - <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
  - <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
  - <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
  - <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.
  - <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.
  - <sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,
  - <sup>20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
- Let us pray: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Embrace us with Your life-giving Word so that we will embrace others in Your Name and pray for them in our midst! Amen.

### • Dear beloved of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

- What do the three readings for today have in common? In the OT reading Moses goes into burn-out: 'I cannot carry the whole nation! Take me LORD, I am finished. These people, they are grumbling, even though they experience one miracle after the other. You give them Manna from heaven, but then they want fish from Egypt. It is too much to carry.'
- And the LORD had compassion with Moses and let him call seventy elders who would share the burden with him. The spirit of the LORD fell on all seventy of them.
- In the Gospel reading we hear how the disciples encounter a miracle worker who did not follow them, but nevertheless drove out demons in the name of Jesus.

Jesus told them that they should not stop someone doing good, as long as it was not going against anything Jesus commanded. This teaches us, that not all will be following the apostles, not all will be in communion with the struggling church on earth, not all will be members of the same church body and yet, those in the church should not stop those from doing their works, as long as what they do does not go against what Jesus teaches. This is what we call tolerance. We should be tolerant of other people doing real good works in Jesus' name, even those outside the church.

- Jesus does not say, that the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right handing out of his means of Grace does not really matter- not at all. But, He does say, those also if they even just give you a cup of water to drink, because you are in Christ, they will be rewarded for that. Jesus also refers to them as the "little ones" whom we should not look down on, but should do everything so that their little faith is increased by hearing the full truth of the Gospel. We should not stop them in their tracks if they are doing good things.

- Then we have heard in the Epistle reading how when we are sick we should call for the elders of the congregation to come and pray for us. In other words, Jesus wants those who trust in Him to share their burdens with one another. Pray for one another. Confess your sins to one another. And even go after and look after those who have left the truth! Dear congregation, when we were baptised into the body of Christ, since that day, we are never alone.

- We have entered a new way of life, where what goes on with me and with my close family is not any-more all that concerns me. In the church we have the pastors and the church council who have the spirit of God, but those are not the only ones. All of you who have been baptised have received the spirit of God. All members of the congregation work together for the common good of the church. And that means, that the little ones of all ages, shapes and sizes and nationalities need to be fed spiritually and looked after bodily. That is what the sacrificial Love of God drives us towards!

- Now, how does the truth fit in there? Because the Truth divides. The Truth is absolute. There is only one Truth not many truths. In other words, are truth and love not mutually exclusive? That is what it often seems to be, and so many are playing these two out against one another. Love against the one absolute Truth!
- They are not against each other and we have to look to Jesus to realise this. Jesus is the Truth. His person and work, His whole being and mission is Truth! And He came to reveal the Truth, namely that we have a Father in Heaven, who has made us and above all loves us. He seeks our communion! And, although the Great Fall into rebellion happened, He did not forsake humankind as a whole! God wants to save humankind, because He has created us.
- He took the full responsibility on Himself to save us, without abusing His immense power and abilities! He came in utter weakness- not with glorious outward power to drum us into following Him- but in weakness. In the man Christ Jesus, being the Truth and fulfilling the Truth, all of this FOR US! He is the Truth who gives the truth, who shares the good news truth with all of us and makes us part of the Truth!
- So, there are two sides of the Truth: The Truth exposes the evilness of our souls and hearts to the core! At the same time, the Truth reveals that God is present in Christ to save us from all evil, in us and around us!
- This absolute Truth in person, this person sharing His faithfulness with us, is the cause of sacrificial Love in us, going out to others. Being united with the Truth, having received His Spirit, Jesus sets us apart in the world, sanctifies us, makes us holy, to share His Truth with others and to pray for each other and for those outside the church for the fulfilment of His saving mission towards humankind.
- That is, as we are united with the Truth, as we hear and experience the Truth, it opens us up to share the Truth in Love. That is, we are prepared by the Truth to share the Truth with others, although it could mean sacrifice, although it could mean being burdened, although it could mean absorbing evil directed at us.
- Does this mean, we should not expose if people are proclaiming another Gospel

etc.? Jesus rebuked Peter, His own disciple, in the strongest terms possible, when he wanted to resist Jesus going to the cross. He said to him, 'Go behind me satan!' We should expose false teachings especially when they are publicly proclaimed and especially when they erode the Word of the Cross.

- But, how, with what attitude in mind: Never to destroy or condemn the person who said it. We should keep the communication channels open from our side and pray for them, earnestly.
- Use the promise God has given us in Christ to pray for the well-being of others, especially for those we struggle to get along with! God hears the prayer of a righteous person! In Christ, we have received Christ's righteousness. You are righteous because of Jesus. Use this your gifted position with God the Father to help others. What a wonderful promise God gives us!
- And once we start praying for those "little ones" of God, peace enters our heart. They are not our worst enemies any-more!
- Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
- *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen. [NKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*