

The Establishment of Faith Lutheran Church - Wylie, TX

16 August, Anno Domini 2020

St. Luke 19:1-10

Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is indeed a joyous day! Almost to the day, eighteen years ago, on August 18th, 2002 this congregation gathered together for the first time to hear the Word of God and receive His gifts at the Summit Building on Brown Street. Those families recognized that there was need for the Gospel in this area and with the blessing of Faith in Plano, undertook the work to plant a mission congregation. For eighteen years, we have enjoyed the blessings of a wonderful relationship and tremendous support from Faith in Plano. Now, today, the Lord of heaven and earth has seen fit to make it possible for us to be established as an independent congregation and a member congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. All glory, honor, thanks, and praise be to You God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You have graciously gathered together a people here in Wylie who knows You and calls upon Your most holy and saving Name.

Here the Lord has established His presence for a singular and eternal purpose - to save sinners. That is what this congregation is - sinners gathering around Jesus that He might save us and preserve us steadfast in the true faith unto eternal life. That such a place even exists is a miracle. Standing before the altar of the first temple, King Solomon asked a profound question that has an even more profound answer. “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” Reason says “It is impossible. The infinite cannot be contained within the finite. Surely, we must ascend to heaven to meet God. Surely God would not, could not, dwell on earth.

And yet that is exactly what He has done. In a great mystery that defied every ounce of reason and wisdom man can muster, God did in fact dwell on the earth. He caused His Name to dwell in the temple which Solomon built. He inhabited the temple in a cloud. He promised to be there to hear the prayers of Solomon, of Israel, of all those who called upon Him in faith and to forgive. God made Himself present for His people. But one day, the glory of the Lord departed from that temple and it was reduced to a pile of dust and rubble by the invading Babylonians. The Israelites had not paid close attention to their ways. They had chased after false gods. They had turned away from the Lord and rejected His Word. They

despised His mercy. They had robbed God of their tithes. No more presence of God toward which to pray. No more sacrifices. No more blood to atone for sin. Would God ever dwell with man again? It seemed the answer was no.

But the temple was only a forshadowing of what was yet to come. Like the sacrifices that daily took place in the temple, the temple itself was a placeholder and reminder that the promised seed of the woman was yet to come who would set us free from death's iron fist. For God would not only dwell on earth in a cloud in a building. He actually took on our flesh and dwelt among us as a man. The true, eternal temple was not made of brick and stone but of Flesh and Blood. In Jesus, the Son of Mary, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. Yes, Solomon, God will dwell on the earth. Indeed "the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God."

And He did this for one reason - to seek and to save the lost; to reconcile man to Himself that forever man might dwell with God in the new Jerusalem, the place of God's presence. We were once exiles and enemies of God. We despised paradise and were cast out. We all, like sheep have gone astray, seeking our own way, but only finding death. That was simply not acceptable to God. Grieved by the what sin had wreaked on creation, God acted to restore what was broken and raise us up out of death. This was the promise to Adam and Eve - that God Himself would take on human flesh and crush Satan's head, to swallow up death, and make all things new. And so in the fullness of time, the Son of God wrapped Himself in the form of a servant and was born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law. There was no waiting for us to reach up to Him. In profound humility the Lord came down to dwell among us and offer His Body and Blood as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. He did this because He desires to be with us. He walked and talked with us. He ate and drank with us. He rejoiced and mourned with us.

We are all little Zacchaeuses among whom the Lord Jesus in His mercy has deigned to dwell to bring us salvation. That is why He comes to dwell here in this house in the midst of this congregation in His Word and in the blessed Sacraments. Because we had been made small and weak by our sin and rebellion, the Lord Jesus has sought us out and made us all sons of Abraham, sons of the true faith through the waters of Holy Baptism. That is indeed what Faith Lutheran Church in Wylie is all about. God caused His saving Gospel to be proclaimed here precisely so that each of us would hear and believe and be saved. Jesus desired to dwell here among us. Faith Lutheran Church in Wylie was part of the eternal plan of God

before the foundations of the earth were even laid. That means you were also a part of that plan. And more remain who do not yet know the Lord. And because the Lord desires the salvation of all, He has planted and established this congregation to proclaim the rich mercy of God in Christ. “How awesome is this place (even with its heaving foundation)! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” Here the life-giving Word of God’s forgiveness sounds forth to scatter the darkness of sin and death. Here the waters of Baptism wash away guilt and create children of God. Here the Supper of Christ’s Holy Body and Blood nourish and strengthen God’s people. Here God comes to dwell with man.

This next step in Faith Wylie’s history has not been without challenge or worry. Will people step up to lead? Will offerings meet the needs of the parish? What will our relationship with Faith in Plano and the school look like afterward? How can we do this in the midst of a pandemic? And while we use our God-given reason to work out these earthly questions, let us not lose sight of the eternal promise that God has given to His Church - not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. Christ crucified is the mighty fortress that can withstand whatever attack Satan levels against the Church. This congregation, each of you, are precious in God’s sight. His eye is ever watchful and His ear is always open to hear our prayers.

And how important that is because we can be absolutely certain that it enrages Satan to no end that the Word of God is purely taught here and the Means of Grace are distributed according to Christ’s institution for the salvation of sinners. He will put every stumbling block in our way that he has at his disposal. But we don’t need to fear Him. The Word of God will always prevail. Truly, it is the work of this congregation to wage war against Satan, to drive back his lies, to overcome his darkness with the light of Christ. We are an outpost in the wilderness, established by the Lord of hosts to rescue those captive in Satan’s kingdom and to hold the line against the devil’s advance against the kingdom of God’s grace.

We will win no matter how fierce the warfare or long the battle because Christ has already won. That is our joy and our strength. The devil has already been overcome. He has been vanquished by the Blood of God’s Son that robbed him of his greatest weapon - our sin. The Lord Jesus has risen from the dead as the victor and sits at the right hand of God. Built on the rock of Christ, the Church will always stand. Nations will rise and fall. Buildings will crumble. But the Word of the Lord and His Church will endure forever because the Lord Himself endures. That rock, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, must always be the

foundation of this congregation or we will most certainly fall. But if we guard our teaching, if we hold one another to the truth of Holy Scripture, if the foundation is always and only the Blood of God's Son, then there is no enemy in heaven or on earth who can overcome us as the people of God. This house must always be a house of prayer where distressed souls longing for rest may cry out to the true God. "Here stands the font before our eyes,/ Telling how God has received us./ The altar recalls Christ's sacrifice/ And what His Supper here gives us./ Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim/ Christ yesterday, today, the same,/ And evermore, our Redeemer." (LSB 645, stz. 4)

And let us not forget that even though we are now an independent congregation we are also a part of the one, holy, Christian, and apostolic Church. We are but the local gathering of that one body. We are also members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We are members of the Texas District. We are members of Circuit 13. We can no more strike out on our own than the nose can say to the eye "I don't need you any longer." The body works and moves and strives together as one. The victorious army is the one that moves together, as one man with one common purpose under one head. One Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all. Our prayers must always ascend on behalf of the whole body of Christ, including our Synod and all its various officials, including Rev. Mengsteb who has joined us today. His presence is a testament to that reality that no congregation is an island unto itself any more than a Christian is. With one and the same voice, without confusion or division we are to proclaim the one Lord Jesus Christ and the one salvation that we have and share in Him.

Dearly beloved saints of Faith Lutheran Church, may it always be our highest joy to be able to gather together here in our heavenly Father's house to receive the life and salvation He freely offers. For your brother's and companions' sake pray always for the peace of this congregation and seek it's good. Let us always pay close attention to the way we walk that we may always walk in faithfulness before God, seeking first His kingdom and righteousness. And may the Lord pour out His perpetual mercy and blessing upon this newly established Faith Lutheran Church in Wylie, TX.

Let us pray: "Have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. And listen to the plea of your servant

and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.”

In the Name of +Jesus.