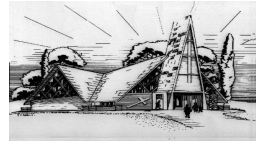




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Oculi Jesus calls you to repentance!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in 1 Cor 10, 1-13:

- **1** ^{ESV} I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,
- **2** and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
- **3** and all ate the same spiritual food,
- **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.
- **5** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.
- **6** Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.
- **7** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."
- **8** We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.
- **9** We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,
- **10** nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.
- **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.
- **12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
- **13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
- Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, inspire in us the love for Your truth and a help us to always flee idolatry. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved in Christ!**

• Today Jesus speaks to all those who have been baptised, who have eaten the spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink. He specifically addresses those of us who have received all these spiritual gifts, that is gifts from heaven. Today He wants to speak a warning to us, that, because we have received all these truly magnificent gifts of God, we take care that not "everything goes". We should not interpret "freedom of the children of God" as, we can do anything we like and desire. It does not mean we can participate in any kind of meal with the Sangomas or any kind of sacrificial meal with the pagans or whoever, including the Jews according to the flesh, without any harm.

• Paul uses the example of the Patriarchs of the Israelites. They were all baptised into Moses. How did that happen? When they passed through the sea and they were in the sea. And they were under the cloud and in the cloud. This was their baptism onto Moses. Nobody was excluded. All received this baptism into the ministry of the Law.

• Then all of them also ate of the same *spiritual* food. When was this? When God gave them the so-called “Manna”. The name “Manna” (“what this?”) comes from the Israelites because they didn’t know what it was. Here Paul reveals it to us: It was food from heaven, from God, spiritual food. It was real food, but there was more to it. It wasn’t given only for the stomach. It was also meant for their souls to feed on.

• So, we take note, there is something like spiritual food! They all ate from it. And they all drank from the same spiritual drink. Namely, from the spiritual rock that was following them! The spiritual rock gave them water! Now, here we get into serious trouble if we want to understand this according to a world-view limited to science only. A physical rock was following them and gave them water. And this, as Paul reveals to us, was a spiritual drink. Again it was water but by drinking this water it was not only giving life to the body, but it was also linking the Israelites to the Spirit of God. In fact Paul then goes and reveals Christ in there and says, ***“the rock was Christ!”*** What is he saying? They drank spiritual water from non other than CHRIST Himself. The source of that water was Christ. He was the rock from which the water came forth. So we have to say, Christ was hiding in, with and under the rock.

• This is amazing, already the patriarchs lived from Christ in the truest sense of the word!

• *[5] “Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overtaken in the wilderness.”* Here lies the warning for us: The Israelites all had received of these wonderful godly gifts, and yet, with most of them it didn’t go well in the end! In other words, even if you receive the greatest gifts of God’s Grace, you can still forfeit eternal life, you can still loose it again. Receiving Baptism, receiving the teaching of the Word in Law and Gospel and going to the Lord’s Supper does not give you a licence to do anything you like. There are certain things, which Paul addresses, which are real dangers for our faith, for our unity with God.

• The first one Paul mentions is idolatry. Do not be idolaters. To be an idolater is

to worship idols. The issue is that you cannot go and worship the living God and an idol. You cannot say yes to God and yes to an idol. If you confess to believe in God you have to condemn all idols. You cannot say yes to God and to Buddha. Syncretism is out of the question. Unfortunately this has become a real problem in Christianity. There is a lot of deception going on where pagan ideas and ways of worship have seeped into the church. The so-called prosperity Gospel churches and word-faith preachers are typically blending the Word of God with a materialistic gospel and therefore creating their own idol whom they call Christ. There are many movements who try to combine the Way of Christ with the ways of their traditional religions, like the Shembe movement. Christian Science movements, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and many more of these can look quite Christian, but they deny that Christ is true man and God and therefore they will not confess the Trinity. As a baptised disciple of Christ you cannot worship with these people. It is idolatry. Or as a congregation, we could not have a combined service with them. Don't participate at those altars. It would be the same as worshipping the man-made golden calf.

- Another area where we need to take care of is the health care. Let us be careful that we don't go to any guru type health practitioner who promises us the world but we are not sure what forces he is tapping into. God is fully capable to look after our body and soul holistically through the people whose vocation it is to study medicine and apply it for the benefit of others. Let us not buy into some strange solution which may cost us our eternal life. Here, let us be weary of the signs and wonders movement too with their hysterical claims. Somebody asked the other day, why are these people not going to the hospitals to heal all the sick there? God can do and does miracles and we can give witness of how God has helped many of us in our congregation. The danger comes when people are attracted to a certain miracle guru, especially when a lot of money is involved too, instead of Christ.

- What is the danger of idolatry? You cannot unite the true God with an idol, which is just a mask for a demon. It is strictly either God or the demon behind the idol! Anything that binds us to a demon is looking for trouble, because that is when one tempts God. That is why Paul says: **Flee idolatry!** Run away from it. If others are engaging in stuff like that, even if it is only for fun, don't go anywhere near it. It can't be fun. It is dangerous as hell. You might even get healed physically, but at what cost, to loose ones soul?

- The second thing Paul warns us against is sexual immorality as *those did*. Now

what did *they* do? They whored with the Moabite women and then they went with them and worshipped the Moabite idols. Here we see, it is again a transgression against the first commandment. This is a real danger. You fall in love with a woman or man and then he or she pulls you off into idolatry. Then you are forfeiting all the good gifts God has given to you for the sake of satisfying your sexual desires or having a relationship with this man or woman! Also here, flee idolatry!

• Thirdly Paul warns against putting Christ to the test like some of them did and were destroyed by the serpents. What happened there? [Num 21,5]: “... *the people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.'*”

• They were grumbling against the spiritual manna and the spiritual water coming from the rock Christ! They did not recognise and they did not give credit to God for the magnificent food and drink He gave to them, there in the dessert. They desired to be back in Egypt! We have to ask ourselves: Are we treasuring what we receive in God's Divine Service? Do we value what He gives as true spiritual gifts, gifts from eternity, which wash us clean, which rewire our mind and replace our desires, which make us holy before God and bless us as we leave for the week? The gifts of God are brilliant gifts, real miracles, flowing forth from the sacrifice of Christ. Our guilt is removed. You don't have to feel guilty any more if you leave the service! Leave your guilt at the altar! Don't take it away with you. Your sins are forgiven! What a great miracle! We receive a new spirit and we eat and drink Christ's Holy Meal in His presence. This sanctifies us and restores our participation in the holy priesthood of all believers. And as priests we receive our portion of the promised land, which is Christ's Body, the Lord Himself.

• Therefore we repent of all these kind of things and ask God to give us a new Spirit who will trust His Word as He promises, so that we will see and discern what wonderful gifts God is giving us here, right here where Christ is amongst us as the One who serves us! Praise be to the Father and 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 you all. Amen.