

Lent Midweek 1/St. Matthias, Apostle: February 24, 2021

“Let Another Take His Office”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our look at words from the enemies of Jesus, we continue on a night that is also the night the Church remembers St. Matthias, Apostle. Last week we heard of Judas, and this week we look at the one who took his office. While Matthias was not considered an enemy of Christ, we commemorate the work he did. Matthias stood in an office with many enemies; many of whom wanted to take the office of God Himself. Matthias taught against the stubborn sinful nature of many who wanted to be God, and let God take their office.

What about Matthias? What’s the big deal about him? While he appears more than once in the Scriptures, we don’t know a whole lot about him. What we do know is important enough for the Holy Spirit to write it down for us. So, what do we know? He was called to stand in the Apostolic Office. He was sent by the Lord as we read about his call meeting in the book of Acts. The Apostles held their call meeting. They asked the Lord to bless their meeting and give them an answer. They put forth two men who met the qualifications: ***Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.***¹ The result of this meeting had Matthias called by the Lord to Word-and-Sacrament ministry.

While Matthias’ name is only mentioned in this text of Acts, the Holy Spirit includes him in many parts of the life of Jesus. Where Jesus preached, taught, and healed, Matthias was there. When Jesus was baptized, was crucified, dead, and buried, Matthias was there. When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, Matthias was there. How do we know? To be an apostle, it was part of the qualifications. While the enemies of Christ use devious and underhanded ways to manipulate people, Jesus would not do that to His Church. He loves His bride too much for that.

So, where the apostles were, there was Matthias. He was present at Pentecost. We read, “***When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place,***”² and before Peter’s sermon we read, “***Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice.***”³ The group of the Apostles is mentioned in Acts 6 where the deacons were appointed, and again in Acts 15, where the apostles and elders (who were pastors) gathered together in Jerusalem to discuss whether circumcision was necessary for salvation.

¹ Acts 1:23

² Acts 2:1

³ Acts 2:14

He was called to preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution. In the eyes of the world, Matthias was a huge failure. We do not hear of him in mega-churches with huge buildings and thousands of people. We don't hear of him being followed by millions on twitter or YouTube. We don't hear of him healing people, who faint because he touched them. We hear that the Lord added 3,000 souls to His Church after Peter preached his Pentecost sermon and his hearers became baptized; but we don't get numbers like Peter's when we're talking about Matthias.

Why is this so? The enemies of Christ and His Church don't see things the same way. As we heard last week, there are different agendas with different goals. The world looks to the define and measure success in nickels and noses, all that matters is numbers; either in the pocketbook or on the roles. It is wowed by statistics and enamored with figures. It looks to sociology and psychology to drive the church, not the Scriptures. It looks to the bright lights and latest technology to wow people, not the truth of the Word of God. It is captivated and charmed with bright lights, smoke machines and screens to digitally enhance the experience; and looks in disgust with the simplicity of Holy Baptism. It looks to the universe for answers, but not the Lord's Supper for salvation. It determines success by its own devices, not in what God says, ***“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”***⁴

This day is not about Matthias. This day highlights the Office in which Matthias stood. St. Paul writes, ***“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.***

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

⁴ Isaiah 55:10–11

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."⁵ Servants are to be faithful. God will give the growth, this is not a number thing, it is a strength of faith thing. Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God are pastors. The most important thing for a congregation is to have a faithful pastor. Faithful to the Word of God, feeding you with the only food that lasts for eternal life. If they stray from that word, they are to be rightly admonished.

It is no secret the world has been hostile to the Lord and His model for success. It is also no secret that this same hostility has crept into many congregations of the Church. Many have condemned the Means of Grace as old-fashioned and the Triune God irrelevant, all in the name of numerical and statistical growth, for spiritual growth has to them become a waste of time. We hear the voices of false prophets on the TV, radio, and internet, and we read their books. We see the mainstream media paint a false picture of the Christ. We hear what our friends say—God-fearing Christians but are members of denominations with teachings contrary to Scripture. We pick up on their false theology. You know you are what you eat, and thus it becomes part of us.

The enemy of God, the devil, is hard at work. He is constantly seeking to steer you away from the truth that is God's inerrant and inspired Word. Satan is clever; he adds just enough truth to his lies to make us doubt what God clearly says. He did it to Adam and Eve. He does it to us. He peppers it just enough so that when we do hear God's true Word, we get angry. Our sinful pride doesn't like to hear that we have believed in error. We don't want to hear that we are poor, miserable sinners who are by nature sinful and unclean. We surely don't want to hear that Jesus paid the full price for our forgiveness and salvation and that we can't do anything to earn our way into heaven. We despise the preaching of His Word and, consequently, His messengers—much as Matthias was despised, for tradition indicates that he was martyred for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the Gospel.

In rebelliousness, it becomes less about celebrating the Lord's Day and more about making every day a Friday. It becomes much less about Christ for you and much more about you for

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:2

you. The so-called modern Church makes you, not God, the center of your universe; you become your own god—so does false preaching and teaching—from this preserve and protect us, heavenly Father! Anything that takes our eyes off Jesus is a deadly poison, for it can lead to eternal death if we do not fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

So, what about Matthias? These are the things which he taught and fought against. He had the same charge from the Lord that Paul gave the young pastor St. Timothy, ***“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”***⁶

Matthias had God’s call and command to preach the Word of God faithfully, regardless of whether pastors want to preach it or the people want to hear it. Matthias’s call is the same call the Lord gave to the rest of the Apostles, to Timothy, to Titus, to His called and ordained servants of the Word today—the pastors the Lord has called to serve Him in His Church today, to carry out His teaching and preaching—for you, His people. The Office of the Holy Ministry today is apostolic—it is Matthanian—for those the Lord has ordained continue the tradition that He gave to the Twelve and to future generations of pastors, preaching Christ crucified—Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. He has sent them to deliver the goods—His goods of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation—to His people, to give you His gifts. Just as the bridegroom lavishes His bride with the finest gifts, so also Christ, your heavenly Bridegroom, gives you the best of His love.

In His love, you have the eyewitness testimony to the words and events of Jesus’ public ministry. You have eyewitness testimony that Jesus died on the cross. He was buried in the tomb. Matthias saw your Lord hanging on the cross, giving His body and shedding His blood for you, and for the life of the world. You have eyewitness testimony that Jesus Christ rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven. With boldness and confidence, we know that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and hell forever—for you!

Let us pray:

“For one in place of Judas,

The apostles sought God’s choice;

The lot fell to Matthias

For whom we now rejoice.

May we like true apostles

⁶ 2 Timothy 4:2–5

Your holy Church defend,
And not betray our calling
But serve You to the end.”⁷ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

⁷ By All Your Saints in Warfare LSB 517:13