

“Apostolic Church”

In the Creed, we confess that we believe in “the one holy Christian and apostolic Church.” That’s a mouthful, and by the time we get to “apostolic” – we are almost out of breath. I don’t know if you’ve notice, but I try to slow down and make sure I emphasize the word “apostolic” – after all, God in His Word to us today – tells us that the apostles are necessary for the Church.

Judas was an apostle – but he is not anymore. He must be replaced. After the eleven remaining apostles are listed, Peter stands up and quotes the Scriptures that say – “Let another take his office.”

This isn’t Peter or any of the apostles saying what is necessary for the Church – it is God who says so. The apostolic office must be fulfilled – and the qualifications are given – it must be one who has accompanied Jesus and the other apostles from the time of Jesus’ Baptism to His ascension. “One of these MEN must become with us a witness to His resurrection.”

Two men are put forward and the lots are cast. The choice is out of their hands. It is the Lord who puts His man in the office – and He selects Matthias – and he is added to the number of those who the Lord “sends” out to be His apostles.

We might suggest that the Lord do His work through His Church with just the Eleven apostles – but He says there must be Twelve – that is the number for the Church in the Scriptures. Just as there were Twelve Tribes of Israel – now there are Twelve Apostles – to preach the Gospel for the whole Church, to bear witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 4 we learn that when Christ ascended, He gave gifts to His Church – He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastor-teachers. In Ephesians we also learn that the Church, “the household of God” – is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.

Now, when you consider that Judas had been an apostle – that foundation might seem pretty shaky. Indeed, the sinfulness of your own pastor might be cause for concern. If the foundation is not solid, secure – then the house will crumble and fall.

It is no coincidence that the events of Judas' death are preserved for us in Holy Scripture. Judas, the Betrayer, knew he had sinned – but he did not rest upon Jesus the Cornerstone. Living under the guilt and sorrow of his sin – he did not trust that the blood of Jesus could set him free from sin – so he went and shed his own blood.

The apostolic foundation is built upon the truth that ALL SIN is forgiven in Jesus. There is no sin too big – no sin, for which Jesus' blood did not pay the price. That is what the apostles witnessed when they saw the resurrected Jesus. He who had taken the whole world's sin as His own – has redeemed the world through the shedding of His blood. Sin and death are defeated – for Christ lives!

That is the witness the apostles are to give to the world – preaching the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, to the ends of the earth. That is the foundation upon which the Church is built – the foundation of the place that Jesus has prepared for you in heaven – the foundation of your salvation. And that is why we confess: “I believe ... in one holy Christian and APOSTOLIC Church.”

The Apostolic Office preaches the good news of the forgiveness of sins to the ends of the earth – a forgiveness, not just for some, but for all people – for you. It is the very foundation of your life.

As you heard today (and know full well) sufferings will come your way. The devil is constantly on the prowl, looking to devour you – seeking to take away your life, even as he took Judas' life --- by taking away your hope – taking away the cornerstone, the foundation of your salvation, Jesus Christ.

There are many preachers in the world today – preaching all sorts of “so-called-Gospels” that are not truly The Gospel. Your itching ears are attracted to such preachers – but if they do not preach that Jesus shed His blood for you and for your salvation – then you will be left to deal with your own sin.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord continues to provide His preachers for His Church – for His people, for you. It is necessary for your life and salvation that His Gospel be given to you. Just as He preaches His forgiveness into your ears – so also He gives you His very own Body and Blood – His life given for yours – His blood covering all your sin.

This is where the Apostolic Church intersects with your life – where the apostolic faith bears witness to your Savior, Jesus Christ, and His resurrection. Since Christ has been raised – your sins have been put away. Since Christ has been raised – your place in heaven is prepared.

That is just as certain and sure as the resurrection of Jesus Himself – for you have been baptized into His death and resurrection – and because He lives, you too shall live – eternally, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.