

“Married to Christ”

2 Corinthians 11:2

December 13, 2020

SERMON 1957

by Michael David Henson

Our sermon text is from 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As this is the first time our congregation has celebrated the day of St. Lucy, Martyr, I wanted to present a bit of her history. St. Lucy of Syracuse died about 300 A.D. under the reign of the Roman Diocletian’s persecution. She was a virgin who was devoted to Christ. Some say she gave away all of her riches to the poor, before she was killed.

There are several legendary stories which are designed to glory in her vow to remain in a state of virginity. One says that when she refused to apostasize, she was condemned to a house of harlotry. When they tried to get her to leave the Roman tribunal, a force kept her there so that she would not move. Even a yoke of oxen was unable to pull her from that spot. Eventually, though they burned her on that spot, she remained alive until a soldier struck her in the neck with a dagger. The pictures of her usually include a dagger and a palm branch. Some have her holding a platter with eyes on it, since she is said to have had her eyes gouged out before her execution. However, I prefer the ones where she is holding a burning lamp, as a reminder of the five wise virgins who entered into the marriage feast with their lamps burning brightly.

The point of celebrating saints days is made clear in the Book of Concord.

XXI. THE CULT OF SAINTS

¹ It is also taught among us that saints should be kept in remembrance so that our faith may be strengthened when we see what grace they received and how they were sustained by faith. Moreover, their good works are to be an example for us, each of us in his own calling. So His Imperial Majesty may in salutary and godly fashion imitate the example of David in making war on the Turk, for both are incumbents of a royal office which demands the defense and protection of their subjects.

² However, it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that we are to invoke saints or seek help from them. “For there is one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5), who is the only Savior, the only high priest, advocate, and intercessor before God (Rom. 8:34). He alone has promised to hear our prayers. ³ Moreover, according to the Scriptures, the highest form of divine service is sincerely to seek and call upon this same Jesus Christ in every time of need. ⁴ “If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

As for St. Lucy’s vow of virginity. There is a big difference between living as a virginity and a vow of virginity. Those who are not married are expected to be chaste. They are not to engage in premarital sex. This type of virginity is God-pleasing.

According to the papists, a vow of virginity, however, is said to be a sacrifice which one makes toward God, and which earns merit from Him. This type of vow is not Scriptural. The 27th article of the Augsburg Confession speaks about monastic vows. Simply put, it says, “vows cannot nullify Gods’ order and command.” And later it says, “It is not alone God’s command that urges, drives, and compels us to do this {be married}, but God’s creation and order also direct all to marriage who are not endowed with the gift of virginity by a special act of God.”

If someone has the gift of celibacy, then St. Paul says in 1 Cor 7 that unmarried woman is concerned about the Lord’s affairs. A virgin may live in undivided devotion to the Lord, but a married woman needs to be concerned about the needs of her husband and children.

If St. Lucy happened to be one of those who had the special gift of celibacy. Well, then, that is fine. But then her virginity is not something she can offer to God. Instead, it was a gift which God gave to her. And if it was a gift, then to receive it doesn’t provide special merits before God. To make up legendary stories which show her devotion to keeping her man-made and unscriptural vow cannot be celebrated in the church as God pleasing.

The church has remembered her life, because she was a faithful Christian. It would only seem right that a young Christian girl, who was keeping the sixth commandment would have been virgin. The Roman persecutions came and went depending on the reigning emperor and the changing winds of society. As the story goes, a heathen nobleman sought to marry St. Lucy. When she rejected him, he might have turned her over to the authorities for being a Christian. That also seems quite probable. St. Paul says that a Christian is free to marry anyone, as long as he is a Christian(v.39).

The points to consider were listed in the Augsburg Confession. **First** consider what grace they received. St. Lucy received the gift of undivided devotion to the Lord in her virginity. The point is not that she was faithful to some man-made vow, but faithful to her Lord. She confessed her sins and believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. She was not earning merit, but living a life of thankfulness to her Lord.

If she was called upon to confess Christ or face martyrdom, then **second**, we must remember how she was sustained by faith in Christ. She was strengthened to make the good confession even in the face of death. Her good work of faithfulness is to be commended to us. If we are ever told to renounce Christ, we should do as St. Lucy did and entrust our body and soul to Christ.

From where does this kind of faith come? St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Through the preaching of the Word and our baptism into Christ, we have been married to our husband, Jesus Christ. Our undivided devotion to him, as our only God and Husband, comes from the Word and Sacraments.

We were married to Christ through the preaching of the Word and the administration of Holy Baptism. We have been welcomed to the marriage feast of holy Communion because of our marriage to our Head, Jesus Christ. No matter whether we are single or married, Christians are completely devoted to our Savior. When we are in any danger or need, we are not to invoke St. Lucy. We are to pray and seek help from our God alone, just as St. Lucy relied solely upon her Savior. And just as she received

the crown of life, so will you who entrust to Christ your body and soul. Amen.