

# QUASIMODO GENITI (EASTER 2)

April 8 2018

Ezekiel 37:1-14

I John 5:4-10

John 20:19-31

## ***Standing...***

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

Our Gospel lesson records two events—separated by 8 days.  
Sunday to Sunday—the octave of Easter.

We know what happened on Sunday morning. **“Alleluia! Christ is Risen!”**  
But what happened on Sunday evening and the following Sunday?

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

On Sunday evening—the night of the resurrection—Jesus appeared to His band of fearful disciples, of which Thomas either left early or wasn't present.

Remember, these men couldn't stay awake with Christ in the garden.

They fled when Jesus was arrested and,  
kept a safe distance when He was put on trial,  
brutally beaten, and put on the cross.

Being good theologians of glory,  
the disciples didn't know what to make of the suffering, dying kind of Jesus—  
for that matter, nor do we.

But having now risen from the dead what's He going to do with them?  
How will He treat those who denied and betrayed Him?

Will they get a blistering lecture from Him?

Or—will Jesus show up with that whip He made and used against  
the money changers in the Temple area?

“Lock the door! Don't let anybody come in—

not the Romans, certainly not the Jews, and maybe...maybe, not even Jesus.”

But locked doors do nothing. Jesus appears right in the middle of them.

Folks, there’s something about glorified bodies...

They are clothed with attributes of the eternal world.

Glorified bodies can materialize and dematerialize. They defy physics. I mean, Jesus didn’t struggle to take off the grave clothes like Lazarus, nor did He have to yell for angels to move the stone that sealed the tomb.

He passed through the clothes and the stone,  
just like this locked door,

now standing victorious over the grave in a real body—  
among sinners—not seeking retaliation.

Instead, the crucified and risen Jesus brings forgiveness, saying to them, **“Peace be with you!”** Peace from their guilt of leaving His side and deserting Him when He was arrested. Peace for their lack of unbelief and forgetting what He said to them beforehand. It’s like Jesus says, **“I have nothing against you. You’re all forgiven.”**

This was too much. It must be a delusion—maybe Jesus’ spirit (Luke 24:37)!

But it’s neither—it’s neither a delusion or poltergeist.

For Jesus shows them the marks of Calvary—

His hands and His side—the marks of His death.

St. Luke records that Jesus asks for food,  
and He eats in front of them (Luke 24:41-43).

Then, Jesus says, “As the Father sent Me, so I send you.”

Did you pay attention to Ezekiel and those dry bones which were breathed upon?  
Or recall God breathing upon the lifeless body of Adam.

Well here, Jesus breathes on the disciples, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”  
Adding, “If you forgive sins, they are forgiven...”

What’s going on?

Jesus is bringing ordinary men into the holy ministry—  
the holy ministry meant to preserve His Church,  
who by the way would receive the same Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Up until this time, forgiveness came through Jesus,  
which was deemed blasphemous (see Mark 2:7).

People asked, “How can He forgive sins?”

But now, through them—the Apostles—the sent ones—  
 Jesus will announce the forgiveness of God,  
 of which will be granted to any and all who repent.  
 Jesus is ordaining them to preach forgiveness in His Name.  
 This is what the Holy Ministry is to freely bestow—  
 and it's supposed to keep on going—  
 until everything is brought home to Eden.

The protest is made,  
 "How can a human being do that to another human being?" "Forgive their sin?"  
 Because the thought is, especially for today's American Evangelical,  
 "Nobody is going to get between me and my Jesus."  
 "I'll figure out my sin problem all by myself."  
 To which I say, "Good luck with that."  
 That is not God's will...for any one.

The truth is, before Jesus ascends, He puts the next people in His place.  
 Jesus ordains the Apostles,  
 just as St. Paul ordains St. Timothy and St. Titus, and on it goes.  
 This putting Pastors in place to speak for Jesus goes on throughout the ages.

I mean look...  
 If it were up to me, I wouldn't extend the Lord's forgiveness to you so quickly.  
 I'd let you twist in the wind for a little while.  
 Endure just a little bit more with guilt and a sullied conscience...

But that's not how Jesus talks and it's certainly not what He wants.  
 Jesus' desire is for your forgiveness.

Thus, it's what Pastors do. Pastors have been trained, examined, and divinely put into  
 place to give you precisely what Jesus wants—forgiveness of your sins.  
 Not only does Jesus do that when He splashes you with His Word and water,  
 but He does it when He gives you His body and blood,  
 and if that weren't enough,  
 He's given your Pastors the keys to set you free from your sins.

You can hear the Pastor fiddle with the keys when he says,

**"Upon this your confession, I by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained  
 servant of the Word..."**

And by the way, have you noticed what the Pastor wears when he says this?

He wears clothing to erase himself.

Sure, there's a celebratory aspect to his clothing,

but he's vested by the Church to erase himself, so that you only see—  
his face, hands, and if you peek, his feet.

Why? So that he can get to you, size you up and forgive you.

Words to speak, hands to touch and feet to get to you.

The keys jingle some more as the Pastor continues,

**"...announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead of..."**

That's not just in the place of; it's also for the advantage of.

Jesus knows this is really good for you—and how bad you need it.

The Pastor says,

**"...and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ..."**

There it is—this does not originate with me

Jesus thinks you should be forgiven, therefore I think you should be forgiven.

And no sooner than you confess—

that you are locked in sin and cannot release yourself...

the key of absolution turns,

and out pours heaven's forgiveness.

What a splendid gift!

But see, what's our sin?

It's always to despise the gifts God gives.

To think of His gifts as mundane...where you can take it or leave it.

thinking of yourself as being pretty darn good and

thinking of your sins as not that bad.

Beloved, your sins are not good for you. None of them are.

Which is why your Pastors—think of them as the ones who are  
at the end of the parade who clean up all the mess.

Pastor Bruss and I both have a shovel and a bin,

and sometimes it gets pretty bad—but that's what we do.

We clean up the sin which thereby

restores you with a clean conscience.

So as I say, Jesus thinks you should be forgiven.

But look over at your neighbor...

(Jesus thinks they should be forgiven too.)

What do we pray in the Lord's Prayer?

***"Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who trespass against us."***

See, everybody loves forgiveness until they have to offer it to someone else.

But here's the deal.

If you want to be Christian,

it means forgiving everyone else in this room,

and that is not easy.

We think, "Shouldn't they show a little bit of penance first?"

We think, "Shouldn't they grovel a bit more?"

No—Jesus gives us something and we give it to you.

You in turn go out and give it to others...for the absolution is in your mouth—

when you offer forgiveness to your spouse,

members of your family,

your co-workers,

your neighbors.

And every act of forgiveness is a little resurrection.

For without it we're nothing more than a valley of dry bones.

Think of it as this enormous forgiveness fountain Christ has set up.

It begins with Him and flows down to the Church

and flows out from each member of the Church

to the world.

Well, Thomas missed all of this. He missed his ordination ceremony.

And as a result, 2000 years of church history have been extremely hard on 'ole Tommy.

We like to say, "See what happens when you miss church, Thomas?"

Thomas is easy to throw under the bus.

The other disciples filled him in no doubt, but Thomas wasn't quite sure about it...

But there's hope. A week later, the very next Sunday (the Lord's Day),

Jesus comes yet again to this little congregation.

Same house—

Same locked doors—

Comes right on in, as if He owns the joint.

And again, without any retaliation, or any revenge, He says, ***"Peace be with you all! I forgive you. Even you Thomas. I know what you said. Take a look at My nail-***

***scarred hands. Take your hand, put it into My gaping side where the soldier slit it open. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.***

No words could express Thomas' emotion.

He can only offer His deepest thought: ***"My Lord and my God."***

Did Thomas just call Jesus, God? He did, and Jesus doesn't rebuke him.

What the other disciples told Thomas over a week ago was true.

What Jesus told Thomas about His resurrection was true.

Jesus had indeed risen from the dead—

to bring His peace and His forgiveness...

to Thomas,

to all the other disciples,

to all people,

to you!

I doubt Thomas ever touched Jesus' wounds.

But I do know this, faith doesn't come by touch, nor by sight.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

In Thomas' case, his unbelief gives way to believing by the words of Jesus.

And Thomas, the unbelieving skeptic becomes

Thomas the believer,

Thomas the Apostle.

Ordained just like the others

to go into all the world and preach

Christ and Him crucified for your sins,

and bodily raised from the grave for your justification.

How did St. John close his gospel account? Did you hear it?

These things are written that you might believe...

that Jesus is who He says He is.

that Death couldn't hold Him for He is the Son of God.

Since He is the Son of God and since He knows how to defeat death,

then we should probably listen to Him and drink in everything He said.

Because, we are going to die—

rich or poor—wise or foolish—moral or immoral.

Death is our problem.  
It wraps itself around us already...  
    with fading eyesight,  
    thinning hair,  
    wrinkles that continue to form,  
    and cuts that will not heal.  
Our joints ache,  
our metabolism slows,  
disease and disability appear.

Worse, the good we want to do, we find ourselves unable to do.  
The evil we don't want to do, that's exactly what we do.

So, who will save you from that body of death?  
    There is only One who promises resurrection—  
    There is only One who promises life—  
    There is only One who has conquered death, our Lord Jesus Christ.  
    With His blood, Christ the crucified cleanses you from all your sins—  
    with His resurrection, Christ the Risen shows you your future,  
        as is depicted in Ezekiel 37 who will open your grave and reunite  
        your body and soul on the Last Day.

So, let the fearful hear His Word, "Peace be with you."  
Let the unbelieving hear His Word, "Do not disbelieve, believe."  
And let sinners one and all hear His word, "You are forgiven."

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.