

John 20.19-31

Quasimodogeniti

28 April 2019

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ Hallelujah! +

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Beloved in the Lord: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Maybe some of you found it surprising to start the sermon today with that acclamation of Christ's resurrection. Easter, after all, was *last week*. We all know it.

But maybe you missed it. Easter was last week, indeed. But maybe, for you, it came and went just as quickly as any other busy day comes and goes. And, like other busy days, has become a blur. After all, it was Easter eggs to be hidden. Hams and leg of lamb to be put in ovens. When's Auntie June coming over? And, honey, didn't I tell you to pick the ice on the way home from church?

Fortunately, Easter isn't a day, it's a season. And for today and the next 6 Sundays all the blessings of the risen Lord Jesus Christ are laid out before us. A feast far better than any Easter ham. A celebration better than the biggest Easter egg hunt ever. And 6 whole weeks to enjoy it.

And the point of today is this. No. The risen Lord Jesus Christ is not in the grave. That's what the young man had said to the Marys when they arrived: "He is risen. He is not here."

He is not here.

So where is He? He's not on the cross. He's not in the grave. So where is He?

Now, fellow-redeemed: praise and thanks be to God that He didn't leave His little flock to play a "Where's Waldo?" game that lasts until He returns.

For today, Jesus tells us exactly where He's to be found: in His Word and in whatever hull He Himself puts His Word into—whether it's water, or bread, or wine.

That's the entire thrust of the Gospel today.

You see, the Lord Jesus, on the very night of the morning He rose from the dead came among the disciples. Stood in the very midst of them. They'd been playing "Where's Waldo?" all day long. He wasn't any longer on the Cross. He wasn't any longer in His grave. He was risen from the dead.

And in the very body in which He suffered for the sins of the world He came among them. And with His voice with which He had called out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" to preach and proclaim that the forsakenness you for your sins deserve. That the dereliction you for your transgressions deserve. That the hell that you ought to pay for the evil you do and the good you fail to do. Pointing through those words to His fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of all that the Son of Man must suffer and do to gain redemption for sinners—with that very voice that proclaimed it had all fallen on Jesus Himself and that the Father had been faithful to His promises to you by turning His

back on His only-begotten Son—with that very voice He speaks to them. Another sermon. Same message. “Peace be with you.”

Peace. The 10 reconciled to the Father by the blood of Christ. Even treacherous and contrite Peter.

Fellow-redeemed: that’s exactly what you have, too. Peace with God through the blood of Christ. Whatever ways you ruined your own Easter by being distracted from God’s holy Word. Whatever sin has erupted in your life since you last in the pews here. Whatever haunting sin you harbor—like Peter’s—hear Christ’s word: “Peace be with you.”

Oh, the disciples, when they heard that word, they were glad. That’s what John says.

They were glad because no word could have been more precious to them right then and there. They were glad because all their bickering over who was preeminent, all their dozing off on Maundy Thursday night as Jesus sweated out drops of blood, all their cowering in dark corners as the only Righteous One was betrayed into the hands of sinners, all their denying the Lord Jesus by whose high priestly intercession on their behalf He never denied *them* before His Father in heaven—all of that was not counted against them. For there stood Jesus before them: holey hands and holey feet. Side gashed. The scabs around the crown of His sacred head still bright red. Bright red lash marks fresh on His back. And none of that—none of that for Him. Not of that deserved for any sin of His own. It was for them. And for their bickering, dozing off, cowering, denying. Their great redemption price. Even if they had missed it all that first Easter morning, they had missed nothing. Because before them stood the Lord Jesus who announced to them the very peace with God that by His wounds He had won. And His victory over sin, death, and mankind’s murderer, the old evil foe.

Peace be with you.

What word could be more precious to you, fellow-redeemed? For you, too, have looked after me, myself, and I even at the expense of your neighbor, bickering for preeminence. For you, too, have failed to watch and pray at the hour of the tempter’s might. And succumbed to it in great shame. For you, too, have recused yourself from the conversation requiring your confession of Christ. And excused it by invoking being polite. And you, too, have denied the Lord Jesus. If not in word, then in deed and thought. And under the word of the Law you stand condemned. A declared enemy of God Himself.

But that is precisely the great mercy of your Father who is in heaven. For even when you were His enemies, Christ died for you. The Righteous for the unrighteous. That He might reconcile the Father to you.

And risen from the dead He declares to you: “Your enmity is over. The Father is reconciled to you by My blood. Peace be with you.”

You see, fellow-redeemed: that’s Christ in His Word. He is not in the grave. He is risen from the dead. And He is in His Word.

And that’s what this entire thing is about that happens on that first Easter night and eight days later, the next Sunday.

Because the very next thing Jesus does after reconciling His disciples to the Father by the Word of His divine, blood-won peace is this: He says, “Go do this yourselves.” So He breathes on them the Holy Spirit and then says, “Whose soever sins you forgive, they have been forgiven them; and whose soever sins you bind, they are bound.”

Now look, there’s so much going on here it’s almost impossible to touch upon it all. But the first thing Jesus is doing is this. He’s fulfilling a promise He had made to them. Just days after He made it. Because on Maundy Thursday evening, this is what He had told the disciples. That He was going to send the Holy Spirit. That that the Holy Spirit would do two things. One, He’d bear witness about Jesus (John 15.26). And two, the Holy Spirit would “take what belongs to Jesus and declare it.” (John 16.14).

So what is it that belongs to Jesus? Indeed. What is it but life and resurrection from the dead? What is it but the defeat of Satan and hell? What is it but the forgiveness of sins in His name and the peace of His cross?

And with those words: “Whose soever sins you forgive, they have been forgiven them; and whose soever sins you bind, they are bound,” Jesus invests not only His own Word about Himself with power, but He even makes the word spoken by the disciples in Jesus’ name into a powerful word. For just as He spoke peace to them, and they were glad, so also when Christ’s pastors forgive sins in His name—what does Jesus say?—*they have been forgiven*. And just as when pastors forgive sins they have been forgiven by the blood of Christ, so also when they retain sins in His name and declare to the unrepentant sinner that his sins still lie on his own back—so also does the guilt of those sins remain on the unrepentant.

In other words, Christ puts Himself and all He has into that binding and loosing word.

Where’s Jesus? As the young man said at His grave: He is not here. He’s risen. No. Not here. He’s in His Word—even His Word spoken and used by His pastors. When they baptize it’s Christ who’s doing the baptizing. And as the baptized are drowned in the water and brought out again, Christ is there. For their drowning is dying with Christ. And their emerging from the water is rising with Christ from the empty tomb. And the forgiveness of sins poured over the head of the baptized, that’s Christ’s forgiveness of sins. The same He won on His holy cross. And when His pastors say, “My Body. My Blood. Given. Shed. For you. For the forgiveness of sins.” It’s not the pastor’s body and blood, but Christ’s. It’s not the pastor’s voice. But Christ’s. The shedding and giving isn’t the pastor’s, it’s Christ’s. And the forgiveness of sins? That’s not theirs either. It’s Christ’s. Blood bought by the Son of God.

That’s what happens when Jesus breathes out the Holy Spirit on the 10. He makes their word into His Word. And He makes them to speak in His own person. So that to hear the voice of your pastor when He forgives sins is to hear the voice of Jesus Himself. So that to have your sins forgiven on earth is to have the forgiven before the throne of the heavenly Father. So that to hear those words here in the church militant where there is no peace is to make you a citizen of the church triumphant in the peace won by Jesus.

Now look, Thomas—he missed it all. Even after the disciples told him exactly where Jesus was to be found. You see, they were actuating what Jesus had told them—that He was in His Word. And yet, when they proclaimed to Thomas that they had seen Jesus, risen from the dead, all that He said and done—even after all of that, Thomas still wanted to find Jesus somewhere else. He had to *see* Jesus, not *hear* about Him. For Thomas still had a fatal disease. A disease variously called the Old Adam, the natural man, unbelief.

And the first symptom of this disease—the telltale sign you’ve got it—is looking for God where hasn’t promised to be. Which is to say, the telltale symptom is looking for God apart from His Word.

How’s that going for you? Do you seek Him in your heart and feelings? *He is not there*. Do you look for Him or signs of Him in your success, wealth, wellbeing? *He is not there*. How about in the coincidences you invest with miraculous meaning? *He is not there*.

And like doubting Thomas, you can scour and scout all Jerusalem and not find Him. For according to His promise, that’s not where He will be found, but in His Word.

And that’s exactly what Thomas discovered.

He had held the Lord hostage to his vision and tried to put the Lord into a full-nelson and make Him say uncle. “Unless I see. Unless I touch,” Thomas said. Because the Word of Christ—well, He didn’t believe that Jesus would actually do it that way. It had to be flashier. It had to be more intimate. Whatever. It just had to be something else.

That was the Old Adam talking.

And so eight days later it came to a head.

And once again, Jesus came and stood in their midst. The risen Second Adam there to face down the Old Adam dead in his unbelief.

And though Jesus stood there in their midst—still, nothing from the Thomas held in the grip of the Old Adam. Silence. Maybe amazement. Maybe wondering, “What the heck is going on?” But nothing. The Old Adam still holding out for more.

But the Old one didn’t get what the Old one wanted.

Instead, the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, spoke. Just a word. Just soundwaves moving through the air. No more visible to the human eye than an CO₂ molecule. You couldn’t smell it. You couldn’t taste it. You couldn’t feel it.

All you could do was hear. φέρε τὸν δάκτυλον. Stick out your finger, Thomas.

But that was just as the Second Adam wanted it.

For at the word of the Second, the Old Adam didn’t reach out. At His Word the Old Adam didn’t ask for more. At His Word the Old Adam didn’t cry out, “I knew it was You, Jesus, even before You said anything.” Instead, Old Adam—he crumpled to the ground. His unbelief crushed. And only by a word.

Fellow-redeemed: such is the power of God’s Word. It kills and crushes the Old Adam. Even yours. And no sooner has it done that than by the forgiveness of all your sins in Christ it raises you back to life, a new creature in Christ, the kind who can’t help but blurt out, “My Lord and my God!”

And now even doubting Thomas—even he couldn’t remain in his unbelief. And to confirm that Jesus asked him, “Thomas, *have* you believed because you have seen?” Thomas knew the answer. No. It wasn’t his seeing that did it. It was the word of Christ.

So fellow-redeemed: even if you missed Easter—because of distractions, because of whatever—hear me now: The grave has been emptied of Christ. He is not there. He's risen. But His Word? That He's filled up with His crucified and risen Self and with all He's done for you. And your sins have been remitted, forgiven, done away with. Peace be with you!

Hallelujah! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Amen.

pax dei, etc.

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