

QUASIMODO GENITI (EASTER 2)

April 19 2020

Ezekiel 37:1-14

1 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.

On the night of the resurrection Jesus appeared to His fearful disciples,
of which Thomas either left early or was not present at all.

Later, when the disciples told him about it,
Thomas didn't believe them.

Yet on Sunday of the following week,
Jesus showed up again, and this time Thomas was there.

Words cannot express Thomas' emotion.

He only offers his deepest thought:

"My Lord and my God."

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

Sitting...

I had an epiphany this Easter. It's not new to the study of theology, but new to me.

Or, maybe I've had it before, and lost it along the way.

That could be true as well.

However, it really hit me this year.

The insight¹ is how there are two central figures in the Bible,
namely Adam and Jesus.

Adam introduces us to the Old Testament.

Jesus introduces us to the New, wherein Jesus,
fully eclipses Adam.

Adam, as you recall, was made in the image of God,
meaning he was the archetype of human life.

¹ *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: Christians Through the Centuries* by Thomas A. Von Hugel

This image was characterized in that Adam could see within—
 understanding the makeup of another,
 understand their complete composition.

With this, he was given the task of naming the animals.

Adam didn't have to study the composition of a particular animal
 to know how it functioned. He didn't have to dissect it.
 He knew it's composition, and thus,
 the names came simply, effortlessly.

Once Adam saw the Woman he said,

"This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

Adam instantly understood how God built her,
 and how Eve was different
 than anything else in all creation.

Furthermore, Adam innately knew what it took to farm the land—
 his God given vocation.

Being made in the image of God, there wasn't going to be any trial and error.

One could starve if one was left to trial and error in farming.

So, consider—Adam immediately understood the seasons,
 moisture, the pH levels of the soil, and crop yields.

Adam was a walking Farmer's Almanac.

Moreover, he knew how to make the tools required to farm.

I know, I know—we picture Adam a step or two above a caveman,
 using primitive tools, and dragging Eve around the Garden by her hair.

But that's because we have no clue what it's like

to be made in the image of God. That was lost in the Fall.

However, Jesus, even veiled in His humility, gives us a glimpse of it.

It's why Jesus can tell Philip, *"If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."*

For God fully reveals His divine image in the life of Christ.

Beloved, you know what this involves...it involves being able to

walk on water—completely defying physics,

healing diseases with a touch and not

being contaminated by those same diseases,

casting out demons with a word, controlling the weather,

knowing there was a hungry fish with a coin in it's mouth,

and telling Peter exactly where to catch it.

Jesus—the Second Adam—knew what was going on
 in people's minds.

He was able to Transfigure Himself—
 where blinding light emanated from His body.
 He could collapse time,
 in turning water to wine,
 not to mention,
 He could raise the dead...

Are you catching what this divine image is like? Because I can continue...

Jesus was able to multiply food,
 able to pass through people's midst without them seeing where He went,
 able to pass through locked doors,
 able to curse fig trees that weren't producing fruit,
 and even could restore body parts—that were cut off by impetuous Peter.

My point is, had not Sin entered, with Satan's Word believed instead of God's Word—
 which destroyed everything...had that not happened...

Adam—the first Adam—would be recorded as
 doing the exact same miraculous things that Jesus did.
 And ultimately, what has Jesus—the Second Adam—come to do?
 Restore us all, along with Creation itself,
 back to the way God originally intended it.
 We know God did not create Mankind to die.
 But the first Adam did die—just as God said,
 "In the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die."
 This is why with the Second Adam,
 Death could not hold Him.
 Sure, He will let Judas betray Him,
 the Jews run Him through sham trials
 and let the Romans crucify Him.
 But Death—Death can't hold Him.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia.

This is why so many times, when we view Iconography,
 those ancient visual images the Church has used to teach the Christian faith,
 so many of them picture Christ, along with Adam.

Even St. Paul joins these two together when he writes,
"For as by a man came death, (Adam)
by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead." (Jesus)

So, the descendants of Adam reflect only Adam's muddy human image.
in that they sin and die.

However, through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism the descendants of Adam
are born again.

At the font, God's Spirit is breathed into human flesh and blood,
where one becomes a son and daughter of God, heirs of Jesus.
Consequently, all who are reborn in Baptism reflect,
at least partially, the image of God.

Alright, so, what does any of this have to do with Doubting Thomas?

Well, with the two central figures of Adam and Christ in your head,
know that many, if not most, of the major Bible characters we read of,
point in both directions to Adam and to Christ.

The folks we read about in the Bible are descendants of Adam,
in that they bear the family traits of a muddy, human image:
sin and death.

At the same time, they are heirs of Jesus
who have inherited the image of God,
albeit partially.

Some examples include:

Noah—who on the one hand, gets off the Ark, plants a vineyard and gets totally shellacked. Yet, on the other hand, he is a preacher of righteousness right up until he gets on the Ark. One direction points us to the fallenness Adam, the other to the faithfulness of Christ.

What about Abraham? Who, on the one hand, tells King Abimelech of Gerar that Sarah is not his wife, but is his sister. Yet, on the other hand, he willingly takes Isaac to be sacrificed because He believes the promise of the resurrection. One direction points us to the fallenness Adam, the other to the faithfulness of Christ.

David also quickly comes to mind. On the one hand, David commits adultery with Bathsheba, even though he had multiple wives. And yet, on the other hand, David is said to be a man after God's own heart, who will not kill King Saul even though Saul wants to kill him. Again, one direction points us to the fallenness Adam, the other to the faithfulness of Christ.

As Lutherans, we sum up this emphasis made on the likeness of Adam
and the likeness of Christ as *Saint and Sinner*. And this, brings us to Thomas.

When it comes to Thomas' resemblance of Christ...
 right before Jesus goes to Bethany the disciples ask,
*"Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you,
 and are you going there again?"*

*He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."
 Confused the disciples say,
 "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."
 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,
 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there,
 so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

*So Thomas—here's our boy Thomas—called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples,
 "Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

The last line of the last stanza of A Mighty Fortress is what?

Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also:

The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still.

Even in the face of death Thomas essentially says,

"Jesus, where you go, we go."

"And if it requires our lives, so be it."

Thomas has this great boldness.

Later, on the night of Christ's resurrection,

all the other disciples are afraid,

finding safety in numbers, locked inside.

Thomas wasn't with them.

Thomas isn't afraid.

Which is just like your Lord.

So, how then, using Thomas, do the Scriptures point back to Adam?

Well, that's our text for today.

It's when Thomas learns that he missed out on seeing the resurrected Christ, and

Thomas requires to see and touch before he believes.

Beloved, that's not faith, that's doubt,

which points us to the muddy, human image of Adam.

Thomas told the others,

"Unless I see," he said, "I will not believe."

And all week-long Thomas continues

in his unbelief.

Now, truth be told, each one of you has doubted.

Your flesh too has railed against trusting in the unseen.
 Perhaps it has been in a quiet unspoken moment,
 wondering whether an assertion of Holy Scripture is true.
 Or perhaps it has been a dark thought,
 a harsh word,
 a sinful or lustful desire.
 Such sin, and it is sin,
 is simply an expression of unbelief.
 And unbelief dashes hope
 and without hope,
 without faith,
 life is dark indeed.

This is the fallenness of Adam which still clings to you.
 Of which St. Paul details in Romans, chapter 7.

But praise be to God, in His mercy and grace,
 the Lord will not abandon Thomas to unbelief,
 nor will He abandon you to the same.
 For the resurrected Jesus—the Second Adam—
 who passes through locked doors like those beads
 hanging in entry ways, people had in the 70's.
 Jesus comes right on in,
 preaches the same sermon He preached
 the week prior, "Peace be with you."

Then, looking right at Thomas,
 Jesus invites him to touch the Lord's wounded hands,
 and place his hand into our Lord's wounded side.
 The Scriptures don't record Thomas doing so.
 Simply the invitation. Then Jesus says,
 "Do not disbelieve, but believe."
 Thomas heard.
 Thomas saw.
 Thomas believed.
 And with that, faith was worked in him,
 where before, there was only doubt.

Jesus then has a small rebuke for Thomas.

"You believed because you saw.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Essentially Jesus says, "You knew better Adam...I mean, Thomas."
 "You should have trusted the word of the others,
 listened to the preaching and believed it."

It's tempting to think, how blessed Thomas was to experience this—
 to see the resurrected Lord, to maybe even touch the resurrected Lord.
 But what does our Lord say?

Actually, you are more blessed than Thomas was.

Why? Because you have faith,

not from what you've seen, but from what you've heard.

You have faith that is built on something more solid than your eyes,
 a faith that our Epistle lesson says, "overcomes the world."

You have faith that is built on

the rock-solid promises of the Word of God.

In fact that's how our Gospel lesson ends...

these are written so that you—

you—you—you who are hearing...

may believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God,

and that by believing you may have...

life in his name.

Eternal life in Christ's name.

For what do we find in Adam?

Nothing but Sin and Death.

What do we have in Jesus?

Righteousness and Life.

Believing, you have the forgiveness that Jesus won on the cross.

The same forgiveness that the risen Christ breathed into His disciples,
 the night of His resurrection,

that forgiveness was already breathed upon you—this day—
 in the Absolution.

Just as Jesus is free from Death,

you are free from the guilt of your sin.

And believing,

you have the peace that Jesus alone can bring.

And to give you certainty in this—so that you not fall into doubt,

Christ comes to you unseen, with visible elements—

with water and Word that bear Him.

With bread and wine bear Him too.
This is how He comes to you.
And guess what we do upon eating and drinking
Christ's true body and true blood?
We leave the locked room—
just like the disciples did—
forgiven, with faith,
and without fear.

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.