

## Second Sunday of Easter (Quasimodo Geniti) - April 24, 2022

**Readings:** Ezekiel 37: 1-14; 1 John 5: 4-10; John 20: 19-31

### ***The Wounds of Christ Give Us Life***

*“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood”* (1 John 5:7). These three point to Christ and flow from Christ. Jesus shows His disciples His hands side, from which blood and water flowed, saying *“Peace be with you.”* He presents the wounds which turn our fear to gladness and which restore us to the Father. Jesus breathes on His disciples and says, *“Receive the Holy Spirit”* (John 20:23). His breath, His words are Spirit and life. They raise up our dry, dead bones and give us new and everlasting life (Ezek. 37:1–14). Christ now gives His ministers to speak His forgiving, Spirit-filled words to the penitent in His stead. Our Lord continues to come to His people, presenting His wounds to us in the Sacraments of water and blood. He bids us to touch His side at His table, to receive His risen body and blood in true faith, that believing we may have life in His name.

### **Sermon Transcript:**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. And again, He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

I can't get enough of that. The glory and honor and majesty and might of God to prove that He indeed has done what He said He will do. He has risen from the dead. We celebrate the victory over sin. That is what we need to remember in our lives today. We are, or were, like the dry bones that were prophesied to in Ezekiel, dead in our sins and trespasses. The entire world was dead in their sins and trespasses. And yet through the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, His death on the cross gave us the opportunity and the ability to become alive spiritually. And so we are brought to new life, and what does it say, through the spirit, the water and the blood. What do those things symbolize?

It's interesting today we have one of those unique situations where our Epistle lesson and our Gospel lesson were written by the same man. This does not happen very often. In fact, it only happens when we deal with 1, 2 and 3 John, and then the Gospel of John or Revelation and John. It's the only time where we actually hear the Epistle and the Gospel from the same man.

We have John testifying that the water, the blood and the spirit give us the confidence and the hope to stand firm, the knowledge that we are alive. What is that? The Spirit of God is the thing that gave the bones life. The Word spoke and created a creature that had flesh, but it wasn't until the Spirit came upon these bones, these newly formed humans that they became alive.

See, the Word of God goes forth and accomplishes what God desires, but it does that through the power of the Holy Spirit. It's often said that we pray to the Father in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the head of the Godhead. Though they're all equal, He is the primary. He is the one who leads. He has no more majesty and might than the Son and the Holy Spirit, but somebody's got to lead so it is the Father. The Father leads, the Son accomplishes the Father's will, and the Spirit certifies and solidifies and

confirms and brings it all together and makes it work. That's how they work together, and all three of them are working together in us through the water and the blood.

Now, when we read about the crucifixion, and when you heard about the crucifixion as our four Gospel readers were speaking during Good Friday, we hear that He was pierced in the side and blood and water flowed. Now what in the world does that mean? First off, yes, the Romans knew what they were doing so they made sure they got all the way into the chest cavity to make sure that He was definitely dead.

I know it's gross, but there's been a theory going around since like the 1920s or '30s or something that said that Jesus really didn't die on the cross, because that would mean that He rose from the dead. Obviously, miracles like rising from the dead cannot happen so, therefore, Jesus was not dead. You got to love how human logic just decides a priori the miracles can't happen. That as if we and our human intellect are the supreme authority in this world, in this universe.

I mean, come on, we've got modern science working for thousands of years, trying to figure out the universe and we're still discovering new things almost all the time. We can describe what the stuff is, but we can't explain to you how it works or how it came into being or how it fits together or what it does. We're barely scratching the surface. And yet our human logic can say, "Absolutely. Jesus didn't really die because He couldn't because there is no resurrection because there are no miracles."

We know better. Because the Word of God has come to us and the power of the Spirit has enlivened us, and we believe with absolute confidence that Christ Jesus died. The Romans knew what they were doing. They made sure He was dead and that can give us confidence, confidence that if He was dead and He's alive today, that we know, that we also, though we face death every day, though we deserve death because of our sin, because of our rebellion against God, we know that we have life, life in Christ because our sins have been washed away through the blood and the water.

So we get Christ with His side pouring out blood and water, which is very symbolic of our baptisms and our reception of the Lord's supper. The two sacraments where the Holy Spirit works to enliven us and give us faith, the water through the power of the Word in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and with the power of the Holy Spirit brings life from death, flesh and breath from dry bones, holiness from depravity, sinlessness from sinners, through the power of the Word of God, and the Spirit working in and with the water. Same thing with the Lord's supper, the blood of Christ, the body of Christ given to us for the forgiveness of sins. What a glorious thing that is to stand firm in the confidence that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has given us new life by His Word and the Spirit.

Then we get to the Gospel and we have Thomas. Now, John shares this message. Again, John is writing towards the end of his life, and he's filling in some of the gaps that were not in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Not that they were gaps as in they made mistakes and they didn't put the right things in, but they focus on different things. So John wanted to make sure we got the full story, all of the things that he wrote down so that we might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So he has this example of Thomas who, for whatever reason, was not with the 12 on that Easter Sunday. Now was he with his family? Was he hiding out somewhere else? Did he have an extra portion of doubt above and beyond the rest of the disciples? I don't know. It's hard to get any more doubtful than being in a locked room with the doors shut and the windows closed because you're afraid that the Romans or the Jews are going to come, they're going to kill you.

See Thomas gets a bad rap. Doubting Thomas, right? I mean, we all know that, it's familiar. It's almost like Doubting is actually his first name, not Thomas. Doubting Thomas, it just goes together. And yet this is the same Thomas who, as they were getting to head towards Jerusalem, Jesus was describing to His disciples, "I'm going to go to Jerusalem and they're going to kill Me. They're going to torture Me and they're going to kill Me. And that's why I'm going so that I might die." And all the disciples were saying, "No. Come on, Jesus. Let's go back up to Galilee where it's nice and safe. Let's not go to Jerusalem. You can't be serious here."

But Thomas, Thomas said, "Let us go with Him and die with Him." Doesn't sound very doubting to me. Sounds like Thomas was willing, at least he thought he was, just like Peter thought he was ready to follow Jesus to death. At least at that moment, Thomas was not doubting.

Let us look again at the first week that John describes, the first day. "Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace, be with you.'" And when He had said this, what did He do? He showed them His hands and His side because what? The other 11 didn't or 10, because Judas wasn't there, the other 10 did not believe until they saw the hands and saw the side. The only thing different about Thomas and the other 10 was that Thomas said the thing out loud. The rest of them still had the same problem. They didn't believe. They went to the tomb, and they walked away. They sort of believed, but they didn't have a clue what was going on. They didn't understand. They hid, rather than celebrate. Nobody understood what was going on. Thomas just said the quiet part out loud. He's the one that said, "Unless I see the hands, unless I feel the side, I'm not going to believe."

Now we can say that he was rather crass in saying that because it was basically saying, "I don't believe you, disciples. I don't believe what you're saying." So there was some problems. He had questions. He had uncertainty. Yes, he did have doubt. But so do all of us. We have got the full measure of the Word of God. What John said, "All these things were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that by believing you may have life in His name." Then later on, he says that we have conquered the world through our faith. Do you feel like you've conquered the world? What is it, 1 John 5:4 "For every one who has been born of God overcomes the world." And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. We have overcome the world.

Do you feel that, or do you doubt? Are there times when you feel like, "Man, this world is winning. It feels like we're getting nowhere. It feels like we are defeated." I mean, when we look around at the world around us and we see all the chaos, we think, "Man, we have not overcome the world." Or when we look at our own lives. How many times have we looked at our own lives and said, "God, I don't know. All that bad stuff that I did, am I really forgiven? Am I really, truly free from the guilt of my sin?" Or do we pull that guilt back and dwell on it and fold it over a few times and look at it again and wallow in it just a little bit more because we don't really honestly believe that God has fully forgiven us. Not yet anyway.

I don't know why we do it, but we do. We question His power. Now it's okay to look at our own lives and say, "You know what? I have sinned. I've fallen short of the glory of God." That's an honest assessment of your life. That's not the issue. The issue is not believing with absolute certainty that Christ has overcome our sin and this world and, therefore, we live victorious. We as Christians have more peace and more joy and more hope than anybody else in the world. Not because we're such good people and we have such positive attitudes, but because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through the water and the blood and the spirit, overcame the world

and brought us out of this world into His kingdom. Our citizenship is in the kingdom of God. That is our home. That is our identity. That is our security. That is what gives us purpose and meaning in this life.

175 years ago on Tuesday, the German Lutheran Church of Ohio, Missouri and other states, signed a constitution and began their work of ministry here in America as a continuation of what has been going on for, at that time, 1800-and-some-odd years and it continues to go on for the 2000 years that we've been around. The Word of God remains forever. The Word of God does the work. You and me, we are fickle. Sometimes we're brave like Thomas. "Let's go and die with Him," and other times, "Well, unless I really am absolutely a hundred percent certain, I'm not going to do that, or I'm not really going to believe that." So we waffle, we move between confidence and uncertainty, between joy and guilt, and we're never quite fully able to totally stand knowing.

But the Word endures. The Word is firm. And it is our faith in the Word that gives us hope. The Word does not change. The Word is solid. The Word is firm and, therefore, we are firm because the Word is working within us. It is not us, but Christ within us that brings us hope. So whenever we waffle in our certainty, whenever we are tempted to be disquieted in this world, rather than at peace, whenever we find our focus on despair, rather than joy, what do we do? Pull ourselves up by the boot straps, try even harder? Eh, you're going to get mixed results.

Turn to the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that that Word, which brought life from death and brought you from death to life, that that Word is true and remains in you and He has claimed you and you are His child and, therefore, you have the full inheritance of the salvation of God today. That Word will bring you peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. That Word will bring back the joy of your salvation. That Word stands us firm on a hope that even though we have not yet seen with our own eyes our resurrected Lord, we confess with Job who lived some who knows two, three, 4,000 years before Jesus said firmly, "I know that my Redeemer lives and I will see my Redeemer with my own eyes." 6,000 years of history of the confidence that the Word of God will do what the Word of God says it will do is our heritage, is our hope, is our confidence.

The Word of the Lord endures forever and, therefore, we who are people of the Word endure forever by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the water and the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Stand firm. Be at peace. Know the joy and the hope of your salvation because He has risen. He has risen, indeed. Alleluia!

Amen and amen. God's peace be with you.