

“He Comes by Water and Blood”

1 John 5:1-8

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

Focusing on the water and the blood, I was reminded this week of a famous painting I remember from my Art History class in college. I tried to look it up online and found similar ones, but couldn't find the one fixed in my mind.

The painting is of the crucifixion of Christ. Christ is hanging on the cross - dead, already having given up His Spirit, the soldier has pierced His side, and the water and the blood is pouring out with two angels catching the water in one bowl and the blood in another.

The imagery of that painting perfectly captures the meaning of what John was writing about in our Epistle lesson. Jesus Christ is the One who came by water and blood.

He comes to us by water in Holy Baptism. But this is not simple clear water. This is water joined to and combined with God's Word. With our human eyes we see the water of Baptism as being so simple and clear (I get it out of the faucet here at church), but with our eyes of faith, we see more than just the water.

This is why the great mysteries of faith appear to be such foolishness

to those who do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their heart. They have no eyes of faith. There is a veil hanging over them that does not allow them to see the truth.

Most people in this world look at Baptism and say: “It’s just a ritual that you go through. What it symbolizes is really nice, but it’s just splashing some water and saying some words.” But it isn’t just water and what is spoken are not just some words. It’s Christ’s blood that poured out of His wounds as He hung on the cross that gives power to that water. The Word is joined with the water, and the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is given to us in Baptism.

As I said last week, words require action to follow. Love is a series of actions over time. We gather as God’s people to celebrate the faithfulness and ongoing display of love that our Father in heaven has shown in how He has rescued us from sin and death. As I said last week, to adequately give thanks for giving life and selflessly giving love and bearing the burden of sin, and raising you up when you were helpless: Where do you begin to give thanks to God?

By the way, did anyone adjust your Mother’s Day activities after last Sunday when we pondered the question of “how can you possibly give adequate thanks for giving life and raising you up and protecting you when you had no strength?” We do celebrate long term love and devotion on several levels today.

The loving action of a mother to her child seems so obvious to us and

is celebrated by most all people. At the same time, the loving action of Christ our Lord, by most, is called foolishness. Yet, the truth remains, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” Love is seen in action much more than in words.

Christ came by water and blood. He continues to come by water and blood. Once again, the world says: “It’s only a ritual.” Our human eyes only see bread and wine. It is only with our eyes of faith that we see the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord that comes to us and is present with us in, with, and under those simple earthly elements.

All of the wisdom of the world cannot understand this mystery. But as John tells us, Christ’s victory on the cross has overcome the world. Christ’s victory has overcome every attempt that the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature has made to deceive us, harm us, or defeat us.

Now the devil is still very crafty, and we never need to look too far to see trouble in this life. But I believe that God allows these trials and difficulties for a reason. During very difficult times, a great many people tend to focus on their relationship with God. We say: “Thank you Lord for keeping me safe; or thank you Lord for healing my disease; or thank you Lord for giving me the strength to deal with this affliction or situation.”

But sometimes we forget the most important thing for which to give thanks. “Thank you Lord for calling me to faith through Holy Baptism; thank you Lord for providing forgiveness for my sins through Your Son’s blood on the cross; thank you Lord for assuring me that if it is my time to be

called out of this life that you have prepared me for this day.”

Whether we are in the midst of suffering a loss or living in plenty, we need to have the same attitude as Paul who said in his letter to the Philippians, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him” [Phil. 3:8-9a].

Christ’s blood was shed and His body was killed, buried, and rose anew on Easter morn. St. John says, “This is the victory that has overcome the world.” That lifeless body hanging on the cross with water and blood pouring out of His side was the Author of life at the Creation, and now is the Author and Perfecter of your faith.

The world and all its troubles cannot harm us. Christ comes to us through water and blood so that when our bodies are broken and buried in the ground, we who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will rise to a new life just as He did.

Where do you possibly begin to give thanks for the gift of life? Where do you begin to give thanks for raising you up when you were helpless? There is no way to properly give thanks. It is purely a gracious gift that we are to receive with joy as Christ comes to us by water and blood. Amen. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.