

“The Message We Have Heard From the Beginning”

1 John 1:1—2:2

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

Traditionally, on the Sunday after Easter, we turn our attention to Jesus revealing Himself to the disciples and how Thomas failed to believe the message that Christ is risen!! This year, Thomas is going to get a break, because, here at Our Redeemer, we are recognizing a milestone in our history.

As you know, this congregation received its charter in 1940, which means this is the 75th year of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. The Old Chapel was built in 1942. Up until that time, those Lutherans who were gathering on the north side of town worshiped in an upper room in Durst’s Dairy.

The first time they gathered for worship was on the second Sunday of April in 1932. On April 10, which was the Third Sunday of Easter that year, Lutherans gathered on the north side of Quincy. For 10 years, they continued to gather in Durst’s Dairy. When Durst’s Dairy moved into a new building, the people of Our Redeemer moved with them.

Then, finally, after 10 years, in the midst of WWII, even with the shortages and rationings that everyone endured, the Old Chapel was built. Twenty years later, in 1962, this sanctuary was built.

But the legacy of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is not found in the construction of bigger, better, and more beautiful buildings. The legacy of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is that the message of the Word of God preached to the people in the beginning – there at Durst Dairy – is the same message I now proclaim to you.

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If someone who gathered with Pastor Otto at Durst Dairy walked in and gathered with us today, they would not feel out of place. The message we have heard from the beginning is the message being proclaimed to you today.

That was John's message in his First Epistle, in his first letter, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" – John says, that is what I am continuing to proclaim to you.

Last week, on Easter, I spoke about the eye-witnesses of the empty tomb, of the risen Christ. How they never changed their story; and all of the other disciples besides John were killed by unbelievers for maintaining the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. And John died as a prisoner on the Island of Patmos. These men, as a group, died at the hands of unbelievers because they would not change their story, and none of the remaining disciples who saw the resurrected Christ ever changed their story – even under the penalty of death.

This is what John is talking about in his first Epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life” this is what we continue to proclaim to you.

The message of the Gospel, the Word of Life, does not change. The message of the Gospel cannot change. What John heard with his ears; what John saw with his own eyes – the Son of God hanging on a cross, dying for your sins and mine; what John and the other disciples looked upon and touched with their own hands – the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, risen from the dead; this is the Word of Life.

“Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side.” This is what John and the disciples witnessed. This is what they have heard and seen and touched. This is what cannot be changed. I am a poor miserable sinner who needed the Son of God to carry my sin to the cross and grave.

As John says and as we have already confessed earlier in our liturgy, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but God who is faithful and just, will forgive us all our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

That is why we are here. We need forgiveness, because none of us can say that we are without sin. We need what John heard with his ears; what John saw with his own eyes – the Son

of God hanging on a cross, dying for your sins and mine; what John and the other disciples looked upon and touched with their own hands – the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, risen from the dead; this is what we need. We need the crucified and risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – the same one John heard speak the Word of Life; the same one John saw with his own eyes; the same one who John touched, who came in flesh and blood – and who still comes in flesh and blood.

The Word of Life preached by John is the same Word of Life preached by Pastor Otto, by Pastor Troxel, and by me. If you ever hear something from me which is different than the Word of Life proclaimed by John, your job is to let me know. I am not without sin. I am not without fault. If I tell you that my word is infallible, that I am without sin, then, as John says, “I am a liar.”

This church has consistently preached the Word of Life to you, not because the pastors or the people are without sin, but because we have preached, taught, and confessed “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which [the disciples] have seen with [their] eyes, which [the disciples and you and I] have touched with our hands” – the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Have confidence in the Word of God. It is the Word of Life of our Redeemer. Amen.

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