

“He Comes by Water and Blood”

1 John 5:1-8

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

When I was in college, I was required to take an art class. As those who have attended my Confirmation or Bible classes can tell you, my artistic skill is beyond lacking. My stick people don't even look like stick people. Thankfully, there was a class offered called, “Christian Art and Architecture.” It was one of my favorite and most memorable classes in all my years of college.

So often, as I am reading Scripture, especially when I am organizing my thoughts for a sermon, the images and artwork I have been blessed to see over the years will come flooding back through my mind. Art is a powerful tool. Truly a picture is worth 1000 words. Jesus says, “The eye is the lamp to the body.” If the light that enters you through your eyes is darkness, how deep is that darkness within you. Be careful what you hold before your eyes. Those images will stay with you all your life. Seek out the good stuff.

One of my favorite paintings we studied in my art class in college was a painting of the crucifixion of Jesus. 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 so richly captures the meaning of what John was writing about in our Epistle reading. 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 the 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 some water, and what is spoken are not just any words. It is Christ's blood that poured out of His wounds as He hung on the cross that makes that water meaningful when joined with the

Word of God. The Word is joined with the water, and you are washed in the blood of the Lamb “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

In our readings for today, within the context of Jesus laying down His life for His friends and coming to us in the water and blood, and Peter boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins we receive “through His name.” Within the context of our readings, there is quite a bit which is said about obeying His commandments and keeping His commandments.

Jesus says, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.” John tells us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” Now clearly, keeping the Law cannot lead to life because none of us have any possibility of actually keeping the fullness of the Law. As I said a couple of weeks ago, if there was the slimmest, most remote chance that we could keep God’s Law and gain salvation, or be able to do enough to make up for our faults that we could satisfy our Lord and be deemed righteous for our works, then that is exactly what God would be demanding of us. Thanks be to God that He sent Jesus instead to win that victory for us.

The joy found in the Gospel is not meant to trivialize the great burden that sin has upon a soul. The old Adam and the New Man are in constant tension. We still wrestle with the

desires of the flesh. However, the demands of the Law, the fullness of obedience to the Law, are no longer at odds with our salvation. The doing of God's Law, the keeping of His commandments as the Holy Spirit inspires us to do them, have been organically integrated into our life in Christ.

We fail miserably to do God's will and keep His commandments in the perfect manner which the Law demands, but Peter says, "everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness in His name." And Scripture assures us (promises us) that we have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. And we ironically, paradoxically come before our Lord each week and renounce any assertion of our sinlessness. We confess the depth of our sin and seek out His grace in the words of the Absolution.

Those words of Absolution are spoken and it is as if the water and the blood of Christ Himself comes showering down upon us from the cross. This is our blessed reality living out our days as the baptized, forgiven people of God. 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.