

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Easter 2
Saturday, April 10, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 11, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“You are Forgiven”

John 20:19-31

Each year, on the Sunday after Easter, we get to recount the events of Easter evening. We will talk a little bit about doubting Thomas, but I want to focus on what I see as the most important part of Jesus’ visit with the disciples in the Upper Room – the establishment of what we know as the Office of the Keys. We often refer to this as “Confession and Absolution.”

On Easter Sunday, we turned our attention to the reality that Jesus is here. The grave is empty – as the angel at the door of the tomb said, “He is not here.” But He is here with us today in many and various ways. The most obvious way is what we will be experiencing in a few minutes as we participate in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus as He comes to us under the form of bread and wine. Heaven and earth join together and Jesus is made manifest in the Sacrament. This is My body; this is My blood. His words are sure. He is here.

Scripture is very clear that God is “not a God who is far off.” He is not wafting around waiting for me to speak the Words of Institution before He is present among us. Paul tells us, “do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?” [2 Cor. 13:5]. And in Romans 8, “Christ is in you” [8:10]. Again,

Paul says, "It is Christ who lives in me," [Gal. 2:20]. And we carry around this treasure in "jars of clay."

As we heard last week, "He is here." And you carry Him with you wherever you go. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you," says the Lord. Paul goes on to say that through faith "Christ makes a home in your heart." You are never alone. We spoke about this on Maundy Thursday, even when all the world seems to be in chaos and disarray, it is comforting to know that Jesus is in charge of the entire situation. He is here.

But Him being here in you is not some inward feeling. Faith is not an emotion, not that it doesn't bring forth an emotional response. When you look upon where we were and where the Lord has brought us, there should be an outpouring of emotion and joy and thankfulness. I get chills every time we sing, "Now the Vault of Heaven Resounds" as we just did. "Christ has triumphed! He is living!" How could that not stir your heart within you?

Yet, when we look at the objective nature of our faith, we see the tangible reality of the Word of God in the water of Baptism being applied. And with that comes all of the promises of the washing of regeneration and our sins being washed clean – separated from us as far as the east is from the west. It is the Word joined in the waters of Baptism that makes it valuable. This is why we are reminded to remember our Baptism daily. Jesus is the Word made flesh, as John tells us, and Jesus is in that water. Whenever we are blessed to witness a

Baptism, we can confidently say, “He is here.” We are washed in the blood of the Lamb, as Scripture tells us.

We have the objective Word of God itself – Divinely inspired and handed down to us through the generations. God’s promises given to Adam and all of Adam’s children that salvation was coming and the forgiveness of sins was a reality became a reality when the world witnessed the guilt of all sin paid in full and Christ conquered sin and death.

Now that Christ has triumphed by paying the ransom price for our sin with His own blood; Now that He has taken His place as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; Now that Christ has triumphed and He is living – we turn our attention to the part of the account of Jesus’ interaction with His disciples that first Easter evening which usually gets overlooked because the issue with Thomas is such a glaring problem and offers so many choices for preaching.

Jesus says, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” The word “apostle” means “one who is sent.” The church of Christ, the Christian church, is the one holy Christian and apostolic church – as we confess in the Nicene Creed. Christ is found in His church, and of course, the church is not a building – the church is you. Paul refers to you as the body of Christ because, as Jesus says, “You are in Me and I am in you” [Jn. 14:20].

And in this church, the body of Christ, which has been sent into the world, we see the Christ in action. And other than the Word joined with the water in Baptism and the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, the Word made flesh,

coming to us in the Sacrament, there is no more vivid display of Christ in action that in the Office of the Keys which Jesus gives to the one holy apostolic church.

Jesus says, “If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven.” I stand before you each week and proclaim that I stand “in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

And you are forgiven. Christ is here. Christ is in action here in and among you, the Body of Christ, His Church. When you hear those words spoken by me, you are to hear them as if they are spoken by Jesus Himself. I speak them in His stead and by His command. Those words are meant to be heard as if our Lord descended and spoke to you from His own mouth.

Of course, He has told us that when He comes again, it will be for the sole purpose of bringing an end to this age. Therefore, He gave the church of the apostles the authority to speak for Him. He is here in the written Word, in the proclaimed Word, in the announcement of the forgiveness of sins, in His own flesh and blood, and in the coming weeks – in the waters of Baptism as two families in our congregation have been blessed with the birth of a child in recent weeks.

In all of those ways in which the Lord is here and presents Himself, in all of the ways in which the Word is brought to us, the promise of Jesus spoken in the Upper Room concerning your sins is sure, “They are forgiven.” Amen.