

Easter 2 4/23/17
John 20:19-31 A

OUR SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL, THE 20TH CHAPTER

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Today is the 2nd Sunday after Easter. In the Church Year, this Sunday has a most interesting name. This Sunday after Easter is called Low Sunday. It doesn't refer to "low" attendance after everyone has been to church Easter Sunday; nor feeling "low" that the tax man came this past week; nor even low that the weather has been cloudy and cold, which means you have had precious little time to work on your golf game. This Sunday is called "Low" Sunday because of how the disciples felt after Easter. They could not see the meaning of Easter for their faith and life. They were walking by fear, instead of faith. Honestly, that's the way we often think and walk, isn't it? Last Sunday was Easter. The candy is gone. The last of the ham has been eaten, so Easter must be over, right?

This is how Satan seeks to work on you, my friends. The last thing Satan wants you to believe is that Easter is FOR YOU -- for your faith and your life. If the evil foe can convince you that Christ's death and resurrection were just events from a story long ago, then he has convinced you that Jesus' Easter resurrection has no meaning for you.

The risen, living Christ comes to His disciples the evening of His resurrection and the Evangelist tells us, "He breathed on them". Those are interesting words. Why did He do that? Fresh breath? No, that's not it. You've seen that in the old western movies -- a person is thought to be dead, so someone puts their face directly over their mouth to see if you can feel their warm breath to see if they are alive. So, maybe Jesus wanted

them to feel His warm breath and know He was alive. No, that's not it, either. After all, they had just seen Him with their own eyes, saw the wounds in His hands and side; they heard the words from His mouth. They knew He was alive.

To understand what Jesus was doing, we must go back to the account of creation in the book of Genesis. Moses tells us, "the LORD GOD formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen 2:7). Apart from God, we are dust. Our life comes from God. In the fall into sin, we lost that life. We wanted to be rid of God and His demands on us, we wanted to be in charge, so we fell away in sin. We got what we want. We are on our own, helpless and hopeless, hemmed in and locked in by our fears.

Like the disciples. They had heard Jesus' on promise that on the 3rd day, He would rise again. They had heard the women's report of the empty tomb. Yet, "the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews".

How about you? Are you locked in by your fears? As little children we are afraid of monsters, but as we get older our fears become much more real. Our teenage years are spent wondering "What will people think of me;" "Will I get an "A" in this class; will I pass this class and graduate?" You go to college and fear: what am I going to do with my life? What if I don't get a job that I've spent these years studying to get? What if you don't get into grad school? We get married, a new baby is born, and we hear those dreaded words, "something is wrong with you child". We fear illness and the infirmity of our bodies and minds, and being alone after the death of our helpmate.

But, you know what you should really fear? Your sin. The wages of your sin is death. We may rise to the highest position of power and authority in all the world; we may be the greatest athlete ever; we may have all the money in the world; we may be worshiped by others and yourself, yet you remain a child of the dust who returns to the dust. The English poet said it so true, “Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes” (John Donne).

But, Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified upon Calvary’s sin for the guilt and shame of our sin, so that we would the forgiveness of all our sins. Peter proclaims to us the GOOD NEWS of Easter, “the God of our fathers raised Jesus” (Ac 5). By His Easter resurrection, He has conquered death!

“Jesus lives! The vict’ry’s won!
 Death no longer can appall me;
 Jesus lives! Death’s reign is done!” {LSB 490:1}

Jesus’ Easter victory means that He has conquered all of our fears.

Thomas, the Evangelist tells us, was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them. Instead of believing the words of his fellow disciples, he doubted and remained in his fears.

Our Lord Jesus didn’t want Thomas to remain in doubt and fear, so He came to Him. Our Lord Christ does not want us to walk by doubt or remain in our fear, so He comes to us just as He did Thomas and the ten.

St. John writes in his first Epistle, “[Whenever] we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. This is comforting Gospel. John is teaching us that God is faithful to His promise and always keeps His Word, especially His promise to forgive us our sins.

Whenever we confess our sins, the risen Jesus comes to make the forgiveness He won of the cross and the victory of the empty tomb of Easter morning our very own through the means of grace: Baptism, Absolution, and His Holy Supper. These are the means God Himself has chosen to breathe His eternal life into you.

Jesus is present in the Word and water of Holy Baptism. Peter writes in our Epistle, “He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Jesus is the firstfruits of the dead. When we see Him risen and alive, we know that we will rise to eternal life, and live. That is the LIVING HOPE that God gives us in our Baptism into Christ, for we live and move and have our being in Christ Jesus.

In our Gospel lesson for this Low Sunday, the risen Jesus “breathes” on His disciples. Our life comes from God. In the fall into sin, we lost the life God gave to us. So now, on Easter, God – Christ in human form, risen and alive, never to die again – breathed His eternal life into His disciples, forgiving them their sins and giving them His victory over death and grave. “The words that I have spoken to you,” Jesus says, “are...life” (Jn 6:63).

Jesus is also with us as He is present in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion. In the eating of His Body and the drinking of His Blood, the forgiveness Christ won on the cross is made the forgiveness for your sins, and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation. As you are dismissed from the Lord’s Table, you are dismissed with the words, “The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting.” In the Sacrament of the Altar, the Lord Jesus does just that – He strengthens and preserves you in the faith He began at your baptism.

This is what Easter means for you, Dear Child of God. Left to ourselves in this world we have no peace. Left to ourselves we have not only worry and fear to contend with but also hurt and loss, coupled with a good dose of shame and guilt to top it all off. But we are not alone.

Christ comes to us....to give us peace, that peace which the world cannot give to us and that peace that surpasses all human understanding. The peace of the Lord is with you always. To this we add our glad "AMEN".