

April 19, 2009  
The Second Sunday of Easter  
The Word Sent Out  
John 20:19-23

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

In the name of † Jesus.  
Amen.

**If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.** With these Words the Lord of the Church instituted the Office of the Keys, the Office of the Holy Ministry to proclaim to the world what the Church is all about, what all of the apostles, and what all pastors should be about: the forgiveness of sins. Salvation by grace through faith alone. Salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Eternal life and salvation through the forgiveness of sins. A message to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, no matter where you are sent.

Saint John was in the upper room that Sunday evening fearful of the Jews. He was present when the Lord appeared to the disciples that Easter evening. He heard the Words of the Lord. That brings us to John's first epistle. John, it seems, was dealing with those in the Church who denied that Jesus was truly God. That Jesus was only a man among men. **THE** man among men. As only a man among men, Christ's blood would not atone for our sins. And yet as John writes this first Epistle he reveals to all sinners the purpose and work of Jesus death and resurrection from the dead.

**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- the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life...**

In John's preaching and writing He proclaims the forgiveness of sins. The Word made Flesh sacrificed on the Tree of the Cross and Risen from the dead. And this Son of Thunder preaches it to the world. To those who deny that Jesus is even God in flesh made manifest. Even to those who had a hand in crucifying the King of the Jews with Peter in the book of Acts just before our first Reading this day. John even in his time on the island of Patmos, exiled for the work that he did continued to preach the forgiveness of sins to the most miserable of sinners. He does what the Lord sent Him out into the world to do. Preach that the forgiveness of your sins has been won for you.

**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

Jesus even wanted to forgive those who had crucified Him. He has forgiven those who do not rightly believe in Him as the Son of God. God gives up on no one. He wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And so He sends out witnesses. He sends them His Word.

**...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ...This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.**

That they might repent and believe. That they might live and not die. Even to those who crucified Him, to those who reject who He is, and even to us.

Which is GOOD NEWS! For we are a part of those groups. By our sins we nailed Him to the cross. By our sins we inflicted the brutal punishment that He endured. It was not just Caiaphas, not just Pilate,

or Judas who brought Jesus death, but you and I. Remember those words that Jesus spoke from the cross: **Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.** He wasn't just speaking those words about the Roman executioners, but He was speaking those words about us. Forgive them. Repent and believe. That we may live and not die.

And the Lord sent out His apostles so that we may hear their words. And so we heard their words today, again. They were sent to fill us with His Word, with His life, with His forgiveness. That we know the truth. That the truth we know first is that we are sinners. And we don't like to talk about our sins. We don't want to talk about sin. Oh, we don't mind talking about some of the little things that we've done. We don't mind admitting some of our shortfalls. Some of our struggles. That we really ought to be better. We don't even mind putting together a system of things to work on: being a better pastor, not getting so angry, spending more time in the Word, not being so bossy, not always having to have MY way, getting a handle on my sins

But do we really want to do these things? Probably, but that is not what repentance is. That's not confessing our sins. It's us trying to take the sins of our lives and trying to deal with them ourselves, sorting them out, rearranging them. It sounds like self-improvement. Let ME see what I can do for MYSELF! But what about when you stand before our Lord? Is there any room to say, Lord, *I tried. I'm trying to be a good person. But its hard. I'm trying not to be so bossy or gossipy but the news is just so juicy.* Before God it is as He says. **YOU ARE A SINNER!** And we reply: **I AM. I AM A POOR MISERABLE SINNER!** Not that I've done a few sins, but that I am a sinner. We may not, as Saint John puts it, claim to be without sin.

**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*** When you pray the Lord's prayer in a bit praying that God's will be done, but at the same time wanting for your own will. Putting yourself before everyone else. You know deep down, look in your heart, you see the sin. You are a sinner!

But this Jesus who you crucified, God raised from the dead. The one who was dead is alive again. And He rose to give us life. And He continues that work. And He continues the work through the ones He sends His Word with. He preached and He is preaching now. He raised the dead then, and He is raising the dead now. There are many who are proclaiming this Word. More preaching His Word. More preaching His death and resurrection. More preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins. More, who have been sent by Him, with His Word, that all may live. That is why our sins were bore by Him, that He died for us. That our sins wouldn't just be kinda taken care of by us, but forgiven by Him.

As John wrote: **My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.** That is what the preaching of John, Peter, Paul, Rev. Puls, and Rev. Buss is to be about. To know that ours sins have been cleansed. To create in us a clean heart. To wash us in His blood, and breathe new life in us. To raise us from the death of sin, to life with Him. And He still does these things, through those He has sent out. Through His Word.

Just as Christ came to the disciples that first Easter evening and proclaimed to them: **Peace be with you.** He comes today with that same peace. For us He has sent His Word of peace and forgiveness. And *that* WORD always does what it says. And that promise that He gave to the apostles that night, He gives us the promise sent by His Father to us, the Holy Spirit given in Holy Baptism. And Here, though He does not eat with us, He gives us His body and blood, to eat and drink. And He has clothed us in the robes of righteousness in the Absolution. That we know that we are able to celebrate Easter each day! For He gives us these means, that our sins are forgiven, that we are raised from the dead, and been given a new life. Not a life that we kinda fix, but a new life. That we can live before God in peace.

Nearly 2000 years ago Jesus sent out men to proclaim the Word, the Word made flesh, the Word of peace and life. This coming week on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings the Lord of the church will send men from our two seminaries to congregations throughout the world. To preach, admonish, and to administer the gifts of God. And that is why we are here. For our Lord sent that Word to us. To us who were dead, who crucified our Lord. To us, disgusting sinners who deserve nothing. Forgiven. New. For He is here alive and working. That we repent and believe. That we may live and not die.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.