



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Quasimodo Geniti (Proper B) 2018

Getting filled with the Spirit!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 20, 19-31:

• ^{ESV 19} On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

• ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

• ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

• ²² And when he had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

• ²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

• ²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

• ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

• ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

• ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

• ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

• ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

• ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

• ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and resurrect our minds and our hearts so that we will believe and see! Amen.*

• Dear beloved of God!

• Jesus has risen! He has risen indeed! Wherever disciples of Jesus gather to receive His Word, Jesus comes into their midst, whether they hide behind closed

doors, in catacombs, in a church building, in a house, in the open! Members of the congregation might not attend the assembly, just like Thomas on that first gathering of the NT church, on the day of Jesus' Resurrection, but one thing we can count on: Jesus is really present, with both Spirit and Body.

- Jesus attached a great Word of blessing to those who believe without seeing. Those who trust His Word are the ones who are the blessed ones.
- It is very significant, that even after Jesus' Resurrection, even after convincing a sceptical Thomas by showing him the marks of His wounds of the Cross, Jesus would not budge one millimetre from believing is seeing instead of seeing is believing.
- Practically speaking, there was an example of how it could work to successfully recruit disciples for Jesus' assembly. Thomas refused to believe. So, Jesus came to him, as He was in their midst and physically showed Himself to him, basically forced him to believe- who can argue with a resurrected body which you can touch and see, including the physical marks of the wounds of the cross!
- But Jesus is not content with such "faith", the seeing is believing type. Jesus questioned the value of that "faith" throughout His ministry. That is what the Gospel of Mark picked up and we find the same with the Gospel of John. So, the reason for believing is just as important as believing itself. If you believe in Jesus based on 'seeing is believing', you are not blessed, according to Jesus!
- And this is why the so-called signs and wonders movements, operate on false premises, leading millions to a fake kind of faith!
- Its not simply a case of "as long as they believe in Jesus" which is the slogan of a generic type of Christianity. Its misleading, its dangerous. The resurrected Jesus Himself did not accept it!!
- So, its futile, to even go that route. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed, based on the Word of Christ. Lets be even more precise, based on the Word Jesus had given His Twelve disciples. That means for us, the written Word of God.

- That is why I agree with the incentive going out from our sister church in America, the LCMS, who calls each and everyone, “Back to the Bible”. The president challenges all of us to read and study our Bible again. That is what the church needs more than anything else in our times. “Back to the Word of Christ”. A true revival can only come when people learn, study and treasure the Word of God again, above all else.
- For in, with, under and through the Word of Christ the “Ruach” the Spirit of God, the breath of Jesus reaches us and does something with us. Yes, it creates something new, the greatest miracle of all, but not a miracle according to our old Adam’s eyes, not a miracle that will draw “oohs” and “aahs” from our former nature. The Gospel of John calls it a sign, a sign of the Word, of the creative power of the Word. A Word, which heals our soul. A Word which gives us a new Spirit, the Spirit working in, with and under the Word the of Christ!
- The “Ruach” of Christ which has blown over you, today, namely, when you heard it with your own ears, “In the Name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. Go in peace and sin no-more.” The church has not invented those words. They don’t belong to the servants of God’s Word. They come from Christ Jesus, our risen LORD. He has given them to His church explicitly commanding that they should be handed out and that they are filled with the Holy Spirit to the brim!
- Everyone of you who have heard and received this Word today, has been filled with the Holy Spirit! Your sins have been forgiven before our Father in Heaven. How can we be so certain? Our resurrected LORD said so Himself.
- On the other hand, those who don’t believe the Word of Christ, their sins are not forgiven. Also, those who do not want to realise their sinfulness, to them the forgiveness of sins is withheld. They sit with their sins. They remain attached to what they love! And there is no release of their guilt.
- But those who receive the “Ruach” inspired Word of Christ receive the new Life of Christ. For those blessed ones doors of heaven are unlocked. The peace of God

comes to them and drives out fear for death, fear for sin, the world and the devil. The peace of God drives out the accumulated guilt stored deeply in our souls.

• The teaching of the Law of God- Jesus taught Law on that day, by reprimanding Thomas not to go by seeing is believing- that's the First Commandment. Whoever refuses to believe what he cannot see will by default deny faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, the Law of God draws out our guilt from the shadows of our soul. The preaching of the Law of God pulls our hidden accumulated guilt out of the darkness inside our Self and brings it into our conscience, brings it to the light. Then the Holy Spirit inspired Word washes it away so that we are free from it.

• And now, this miracle of God wants to repeat itself, wants to begin walking through our families, through our workplaces, through our community, through those who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit. As you have received forgiveness, you can forgive those who trespass against you.

• And see what unexpected thing happens now, if someone trespasses against you, its not the end of the world. Actually in the new light of Jesus' Resurrection, that becomes an opportunity to hand out the Spirit of Jesus to that person, then and there! I forgive you, because Jesus has forgiven me!

• And the joy of Easter is embedded in this gift. What a miracle of the Word!

• Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit!

Amen.

• *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Amen. [2 Cor 13, 14].*