



Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Sunday Quasimodo Geniti 2017

*Christ Jesus breathes His Spirit and His  
forgiveness into His disciples!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

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

- **ESV** <sup>19</sup> "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."
  - <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.
  - <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."
  - <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
  - <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."
  - <sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.
  - <sup>25</sup> 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."
  - <sup>26</sup> 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."
  - <sup>27</sup> 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."
  - <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"
  - <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
  - <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;
  - <sup>31</sup> 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 give us a new heart which will hear Your Word of the Resurrection of Jesus and believe it without seeing. Amen.*

• **Dear Members of Christ's Body!**

- The scene is Easter evening. The first day of the week. Sunday. Jesus had risen. It's the first day of the new creation, the new Testament. The women had seen

Him. The disciples had locked themselves behind closed doors. Fear. They were afraid there would be investigations and interrogations. The same people who crucified Jesus would surely come after them. We understand their fears. We live behind locked doors too for a lot less.

- And we see Jesus did not hold it against them, that they hadn't obeyed Him, that they hadn't believed, although they were His called ones. Jesus still is the Least, He comes to them, He does not refuse to go to them. He goes to them, there in their locked-up fears and hearts.
- And He brings peace into their miserable situation, a peace which the world cannot give. A peace which is much more worth than any peace between nations. Now, peace between nations, political peace, can be a marvellous good thing. It becomes to be problematic when the peace is based on a common rebellion against Christ! I am not talking about such a peace. Think about the times when after long periods of war there was peace in a region. Peace between nations is necessary for life to continue on earth. Its not something small.
- But the peace Jesus brings transcends earth and gives us the ultimate peace, namely peace with God, our Creator and Judge! Now this is a peace which is so formidable and huge that we cannot even grasp half of what it means. This peace does not stand against God's Commandments. It does not sweep evil under the carpet nor does it fail to deal with detail. The very opposite. It penetrates to the deepest places of our heart and inmost being and starts there to make us peaceful. This peace gives us a good conscience before God.
- On that Easter-morning, Jesus gave His disciples of this fruit of His Passion, of His Peace. First He spoke peace onto them. "Peace be with you!" It is a performative word. This word performs something and Jesus reveals what is happening. He sent them. Just like the Father has send Him, He now sends them. Its the very same mission! This is important to realise! The mission of Christ continues through His disciples who will henceforth be called Apostles- the sent ones. They are sent by Jesus' authority. What does one need to be authorised by God? You need His Spirit. Jesus was baptised for His ministry with the Spirit of God. And now Jesus breathed onto His disciples and spoke to them, receive the Holy Spirit!
- What gift did Jesus authorise them to do? [23] *"If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is*

*withheld.*" Jesus gave them the office of the keys of heaven. Jesus' forgiveness of sins was extended to His Apostles. It was given to all of His disciples, not only to Peter. It was given to the church as a whole.

- The astonishing thing is that God allows the forgiveness of sins to be handed out here on earth by His called members. Many in our days contest this gift and say that only God is allowed to forgive sins. They unfortunately fail to realise that this is God doing it through His members. As members of Christ we become part of His channel of Grace.

- Its absolutely essential though that Christ has instituted, has launched and commanded this key. And we have to remember, a key works both ways. It opens and it locks. Those who are repentant will receive the forgiveness of sins, but those who are in denial of their own sinfulness and refuse to repent, will be stuck with their sin and unless they repent will be found outside the Body of Christ.

- It is really amazing, that the Lord Jesus Christ binds Himself to the word spoken by His servants. It is more than amazing, it is truly comforting. Those who know about fears about Judgement Day will realise how comforting this word is, Your sins are forgiven. Sometimes, we have our days, maybe at a funeral or when we are sick ourselves, that we get an anxiety attack about the Last Day, Judgement Day. There is such a day when Jesus will finally judge all people. All judgement has been given to Jesus by his Father.

- Jesus gave this wonderful gift to the Church to prepare us for this day, so that we will be able to look forward to this final day of judgement without anxiety, fear or despair. If you hear those words spoken by a servant of the word over you, your sins are forgiven, then they are forgiven in Christ's eyes. That is, they are gone, completely gone, absorbed by Christ's sacrifice, taken away by the Lamb of God. Jesus borrows the voice of one of His members, ordained for this duty, to make it certain for our sakes- we need ordination, the congregation needs ordained servants, so that this gift has the highest grade of certainty. Jesu wants to make absolutely certain, 'this is me speaking forgiveness onto you. Go in peace.'

- Its all for our sake. Order and transparency brings certainty. Its crucial to know, this voice that I am hearing is Christ speaking to me.

- And dear members of Christ's Body, when Jesus says they are forgiven, he

means it. They are not hovering in the background, as if they would all come out again on the last day. No. Not at all. Jesus says they are taken away. God will never ever bring them up again. Never ever. He forgives and forgets. And what He forgets is absolutely gone. There might still be repercussions in your life because of our sins. Other people might still remember them, but God does not remember them! So, if you want to have your sins wiped out in God's eyes, there you have the most wonderful gift.

• And we know, this gift is paid for, with a heavy price, with the blood of Jesus. No sin weighs more than the blameless, pure, eternal blood of Jesus. His sacrifice is most certainly enough.

• The forgiveness of sins cleanses our conscience. If our conscience is dirty, is clogged up, is heavy laden, that is when all seems too much. Here comes Jesus with His gift of peace. Forgiveness of sins give peace in the heart, because the Word of Christ clearly reveals to us, the contamination of your conscience is wiped away! No need to stress any further. If there is something you need to do to effect reconciliation Jesus gives us the power to do it. You don't need to be afraid of losing anything. You have everything in Him.

• And we know, from the beautiful passage in John 2, where Jesus turned water into the best wine, that the forgiveness of sins spoken to you is turned into wine, is turned into eternal Life! Whenever you hear these words spoken onto you in the stead and by the command of Jesus, your sins are forgiven, its a marriage feast breaking out and when Jesus comes to the feast, water is turned into the best choicest wine you could ever imagine, forgiveness of sins is turned into the best choicest Life you can imagine. Repentance is turned into a feast of unity.

• We may participate in the Life of the risen Christ. What more do we need in our times? Thank you dearest Jesus! Amen.

• *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.** [Phil 4,7].*