

Quasimodo Geniti

16 April, Anno Domini 2023

1 John 5:4-10

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Fellows victors in Christ,

“Being on the wrong side of history” is a phrase that has come into vogue in recent years. It levels the charge that future generations will see a particular policy or position as obviously foolish, that time will prove truth. I’m sure Caiaphas would have told Jesus and His disciples that their doctrine was on the wrong side of history because people would come to learn in time that preaching the righteousness of faith in Christ would lead to lawlessness and the destruction of God’s people. No doubt, the disciples on Easter evening were wondering if they hadn’t been on the wrong side of history in following Jesus. After all, Jesus was dead and the Jews weren’t. That is why they huddled in fear. They believed there was nothing stopping the Jews from coming and massacring them to extinguish any smoldering embers of Jesus’ teaching. They believed that God had failed.

As we said last week, the disciples abandoned all that Jesus had told them in the face of events that were contradictory to everything reason told them should happen - betrayal, lies, blasphemy, unjust judges, and crucifixion. “These things shall never happen to you, Lord!” They, like we so often do, judged the words and promises of God on the basis of their immediate experience and their own ability to understand things. We suffer the loss of our job and suddenly we doubt God’s promise to provide us our daily bread. We are stricken with a serious mental or physical illness that doesn’t go away and we doubt God’s promise to hear our prayers and to turn everything to our good. Our loved one dies and we doubt that Jesus’ resurrection actually means anything. We are mocked and persecuted for rejecting homosexuality, gender dysphoria, marital unfaithfulness, and living together apart from marriage as perversions and illnesses that need care and counseling and we doubt that the commandments and counsel of God are true. When we stop listening to the words of Jesus we are left huddling in fear, hopelessly trying to keep the world and suffering locked out. We panic. We begin looking around for anything that we think might be able to help us, to save us from suffering and death, to provide us an easier path.

But unbelief in Christ is the wrong side of history. Christ's Word is true. Jesus has been raised from the dead. It doesn't matter that you can't see Him. Death has been conquered. You see sin and evil desires in yourself but Christ has washed you clean and forgiven you. It doesn't matter that you are sick now. You are filled with life. The right side of history is the side in which Christ is the victor over sin and death. It is the side in which the wicked world and its demonic prince have been eternally vanquished. It is the one in which Jesus of Nazareth is proclaimed and believed to be the Son of God who has opened the gates of everlasting life to all who believe in His Name.

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” Dear Christ, that is you! You are those who have heard the testimony of the angels, the testimony of the women, the testimony of the apostles, and the testimony of Jesus Himself. And though you have not seen Jesus alive, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have believed all that you have heard. It would be contrary to Jesus' words to think “Oh, those lucky few who actually got to see Jesus' miracles and His resurrected body.” Jesus declares US to be the blessed ones precisely because we haven't seen the things and yet believe in Him because of what we have heard - the report of those whom He has sent to us. You do not see yet the purification of your flesh but you believe that you are forgiven and pure in the eyes of God for the Bible tells you so. You do not see your body freed from the decay of death but you believe in the resurrection of the body and that you will look upon Jesus face-to-face and be cleaned of death forever for the Bible tells you so. Blessed are you!

It is certainly not wrong to wish to see Jesus but it is wrong to doubt Him because you don't. You have something greater than what the apostles did. You have the Holy Scriptures. You have what God Himself has spoken, that which will endure forever. You have that Word which breathes the Spirit of life into your dry and dusty bones that have long since lost hope because all you see around you in this world is crumbling and dying and the devil and his kingdom seem to be gaining the upper hand. You have the Word which, in spite of all that you see and feel, has cast down Satan from his throne of lies and death and declared you to be a child of the Most High God. And when your hope and confidence rest solely upon this Word, there is no enemy left to frighten you or harm you. By shutting your eyes and ears to the world and your senses and resting in the Christ who rules over all things in heaven and on earth, we are on the right side of history, we are the victors. You have been born of God, being drawn up out of death through the waters of Holy Baptism. You don't belong to death and therefore death cannot harm you anymore than it can harm your Lord. Faith in Jesus Christ is your victory because it is faith in the one who has passed through death and now rules over it. Death must serve

Him and accomplish His purposes. It can no longer steal you from His hand. It can no longer robe you of His promises. It can no longer take life away from you. To live is Christ and to die is gain! This is the power of the Absolution which Christ administers daily and richly in His Church through the Office of the Keys. When He absolves you of your sins He removed death from you. The Law can no longer condemn you. Believe this word. Long for this word. Receive this word as often as you can and need so that you may rest in the victory which Christ has won for you rather than huddling in the fear of unbelief as though Jesus is not alive!

This world has no power over you. You do not need to fear the judgment or the persecution of men because Jesus, who is crucified, has been raised from the dead. And in His minsters He stands in your midst speaking peace, breathing life. And He doesn't simply let you see and touch the wounds of the cross but actually eat and drink of its fruits. All this you have by faith as you believe the testimony of the Spirit and the water and the Blood. And in due time, on the glorious day of our Lord's return, the sons of God will be revealed before the whole world and all will see what you already know and believe - that Christ is the right side and fulfillment and purpose of all history.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keeps your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.