

Where We See Jesus

John 12:20-26, Easter Sunday III

April 21, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....We live in a world where it is very hard to see Jesus. Like the Greeks, we too would see Jesus, but we read the news, we see what is going on in the world, and our hearts are discouraged. How can we see Christ in the midst of these horrible tragedies which occur every week? More often than not, our entire life is much like that time for the disciples after the death of Christ but before His resurrection. All their hopes and dreams perished when Christ died. In like manner, all the evil in this world which our eyes see depresses us. We too would see Jesus, but where is He to be found?

The answer to this question is really very simple: we see Jesus in His Word and Sacraments. We see Jesus when we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures because Jesus comes to us with grace, forgiveness, and peace through the Word spoken, the Sacraments given. In a world full of evil, bloodshed, and chaos, we still have the sweet promises of Christ saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

We should not fear nor be troubled because Christ is waiting for us there at the finish line, where we by faith conquer death and enter life everlasting. You must remember then dear Christian, you are presently running a marathon yourself, and though the devil will throw many obstacles in your path, Christ has already crossed that finish line first for you by His own first death and resurrection. All then that is necessary for you in this race is to persevere in faith unto life everlasting, when you will see Him face to face. Therefore as you run this race of faith and hope, remember the words of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 12, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Our sermon today is divided into three parts, FIRST, we see Jesus in His Word and Sacraments, TWO, the Son of Man is glorified by His death and resurrection, and THREE, Do not love your life here, lest you lose your eternal life in heaven above.

I. We see Jesus in His Word and Sacraments. Our lesson begins with certain Greeks who had a great desire to see Jesus. These Greeks must have lived in Bethsaida, for they knew Phillip and first came to him. Certainly they had heard of the miracles of Jesus, but more importantly they had heard through others the words Jesus preached. When they approach Philip, there is a genuine longing in their heart to see Jesus, for they said "We would see Jesus". This doesn't mean they were curious about what Jesus looked like, rather their soul was drawn to Him. In His Words they were discovering their Savior. We know this also by the

answer of Jesus to Philip and Andrew. Jesus said, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." Soon enough Jesus would be lifted up high on the cross for the sins of all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, all nations. Whenever and wherever His Gospel is preached today, the Holy Spirit opens the spiritual eyes of lost sinners from every nation, and they see Christ for the first time as their Savior. Those who long to be forgiven will find Jesus to be a most merciful Savior. This is why in John 12:32 Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Even now in heaven there are saints gathered together from every nation, and quite possible those Greeks in our lesson today. In the book of Revelation John sees such people in heaven saying, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

While they see Him face to face above, the only way to see Jesus in this world is by faith, through His Word spoken in our Bibles, or the visible Word of Baptism and Holy Communion. If you really want to know who Jesus is and what He is like, the Word alone is the only revelation God will give you, and we should look for Christ in no other place than our Bibles. When people despise God's Word, breaking His third commandment, they live in a world of confusion not knowing God, and it is their own fault and God will punish. Yet if we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest God's Word, the Bible says "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it. The Holy Spirit Himself will come to us in that Word, and also teach and comfort our heart. Jesus said the same in John 14. "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

Besides the hearing of the Word in church, and the private study of the Scriptures, we see and learn of Jesus also by our Baptism and Holy Communion. Thus, if you want to know what Jesus is like, see Him coming to you the first time in your own baptism. You were born dirty and unclean in God's sight, but Christ the Word came to you in, by, and through the Words spoken at your own baptism, and He put His holy name upon you when you were baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By the cleansing power of His Word, He washed away all the dirtiness of your sin, making you clean and white in His sight. Though you still feel and know your sin daily by God's law, by His Gospel you also know God through Christ counts you as holy. You are clothed with His grace, the righteousness of Christ upon you. It is not much different when you receive Holy Communion. You SEE Jesus there also, when He comes to you with His body and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine. You eat the visible bread and drink the visible wine, but faith alone sees these are "Given and shed for you for the remission of

sins." And just as Christ rose from the dead in triumph on the third day, you can rise to your feet after Holy Communion a new man. Second Corinthians 5 says, "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

II. The Son of Man is glorified by His death and resurrection. If then we are to see the true glory of Christ, we must see Him in both His death and resurrection. This is why after speaking of His glory Jesus said to Philip and Andrew, "Verily verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Since all mankind fell in Adam's fall, and thus was subject to the curse of the law which is death and damnation, Christ in our stead would have to suffer and die Himself, even be damned on the cross for our sins. Thus on the cross Jesus abided alone, our sins upon Him, and God the Father truly forsook Him. It was for our sins "he suffered, died, and was buried, but rose again the third day." His resurrection then is like that wheat seed which germinates in the ground, and the new blade of grass springs forth and grows. His Church, the Holy Christian Church, is still growing today wherever the Gospel is preached, and even in our hearts by faith, we grow in grace. His resurrection from the dead is our resurrection too, and "Because I live ye shall live also."

Not only does His resurrection give us life everlasting in heaven, but the power of His life empowers us to spring forth in good works. Jesus said, "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We too die in the knowledge of our sin. The law of God awakens in our soul the knowledge of our deadness, yet faith knows JESUS LIVES - and in Jesus we live also. When we repent of our sins we die every time, yet we do not remain dead but Christ resurrects us in absolution saying, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." His Gospel then causes us to break forth in song, like the birds in Springtime. And just as soon enough all of nature around us will burst forth in blossom and EVERYTHING WILL BE GREEN, so Jesus by His resurrection will cause us to bear rich and abundant fruit in good works. Romans six therefore says, "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection." What then are these good works Jesus wants us to do? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

III. Do not love your life here, lest you lose your eternal life in heaven above. Our last point for the day is really the most important, namely "He that loveth His life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life

eternal." The meaning here is that we should value nothing in this world (not even family) as more important or sacred than our Savior Jesus Christ. "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Rather than loving the world, remember Jesus is your first love because He loved you first. Likewise "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take Thy crown."

This sinful world in which we live then is much like a prostitute who seeks to tempt us away from the gracious and strong arms of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. We dare not indulge in her sinful pleasures which last but a moment, lest we lose our eternal life above. But more importantly, Christ here teaches us we are to hate our life here in comparison to that eternal life above. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." We should also meditate upon the words of Christ in Matthew ten. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." If confessing Christ means they murder you and take your life, so be it. I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home.

Finally beloved, let us close by remembering again we are running a race in faith, a marathon, and we must run this race in patience knowing Christ is waiting for us there at the finish line and a crown of glory waits. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me....if any man serve Me, him will my Father honor." Rest assured by the Word and Sacraments Jesus gives you, you are not alone in this race but Jesus is with you always. Surely He will never leave nor forsake thee. "Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." That is God's sure promise to you. Amen.