

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father...Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."

It has been three weeks since we first celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord. Given the state of the human attention span, that sense of celebration is probably worn pretty thin or gone by now. In this day and age of ever increasing instant gratification we may be thinking that it's time to move on: "Let's get to Whitsunday and Holy Trinity. Come on, hurry up and get to Advent and Christmas. Get a move on!"

And it's no wonder. While we tend to dwell on that which is negative, we would prefer to accentuate the positive. When you look at your past, it is easier to recall the negative; consequently, you would prefer to move past that quickly and on to the better things. The best way to do that is to keep moving forward and quickly. If something undesirable happens, no problem, we're flying by it in a heartbeat. Even better if we can avoid it all together, or ignore it, or pretend like it didn't happen. In every aspect of modern life, and I contend that it's really nothing new, we like to keep a move on.

Similarly, we like to keep positive, as mentioned. Avoid the bad, avoid conflict, keep the peace, stick to the good...such is our way of life. And, like the fast pace we generally stick to in life, I contend that this is also nothing new.

It's a common occurrence in the Church, too. No one likes the Law preached to them, so some will try to find a place where they only hear "uplifting" sermons—that is, sermons that pat them on the back and tell them they're doing a pretty good job, even though they stumble every now and again. Some will try to force their preacher's hand not to preach the Law with one tactic or another: withholding offerings, slandering him and his family, complaining to ecclesiastical supervisors...there is no end to the vices that can be used. And, many preachers easily succumb to these temptations as they try to "keep the peace" (which is really no peace at all) and keep the numbers in the pews or seats and in the plates (especially in harder economic times).

Hence this text as we are at the midway point of the Easter Season. Jesus said, "A little while, and you will not see Me...you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful." Jesus points out that there will be an undesirable time in a little while. One cannot zoom past it. It is unavoidable. It cannot be ignored. There is no sense in pretending like it won't happen. "You **will** weep and lament."

However, the world will rejoice at this time. In the way things are seemingly lined up, the second "person" of the unholy triumvirate is hell-bent against the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Person through whom it was created, no less! You have the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh diametrically opposed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The world will rejoice when it no longer sees Jesus, for it will believe that it has won a victory; it will appear (to them at least) that the unholy triumvirate has succeeded in part against the Holy Trinity. And you, who rejoice in the Holy Trinity, who are in the world but not of the world, will be sorrowful.

Now, at first glance it would appear that Jesus speaks of his death and resurrection. "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." In a little while, Jesus will be out of view, but a little while later, He will be back. It makes sense. The disciples did weep as Jesus died. They scattered out of fear and confusion. There was certainly great sorrow at that time. And the world did rejoice. They mocked Him: "You saved others, save yourself if you really are the Christ!" (cf.

Luke 23:35) The world had won, so it seemed.

Of course, we know otherwise. For God the Father had willed that His Son die for the sins of the world, that the Son shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. It wasn't the world that won as Jesus hung dead on the cross, but God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God had won the victory over the devil, for in the person of the Son, the devil's head was crushed; no longer did the devil have any authority.

And the Son won the victory over the world, too. That which was created through Him is now redeemed by Him. St. John wrote, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:2) On the third day, He rose again, a victor over death, the way of the world, restoring everlasting life. This is the gift He gives to all who believe in Him, or as St. John also wrote, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." (1 John 5:4)

That resurrection is certainly cause for joy and celebration. "[Y]our sorrow will be turned into joy," Jesus continued. And it is a joy we still celebrate this day, Jubilate Sunday: "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands. Hallelujah. Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. Hallelujah." (Introit for Jubilate, Psalm 66:1-2 KJV) **Christ is risen!** Jesus is back within view. The disciples see Him again.

But, there is something else that Jesus said which indicates that what He was not only talking about His death and resurrection: "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, *because I go to the Father.*" No, what Jesus is referring to is not only His death and resurrection, but also His ascension. "In a little while, you will not see Me because I go to the Father, but you will see Me again when I return to take you to where I am." (cf. John 14:3)

Circumstances for sorrow are a little different here. Disciples know that Jesus is not dead, but seated at the right hand of God. It's the worldly influence that causes sorrow in this case.

Not much is written of how the world reacted to Jesus' resurrection. St. Matthew tells us that some guards reported the resurrection to the ruling priests, who then bribed the guards to say that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body. The ruling priests' lie spread throughout the country, even reported among the Jews to this day, St. Matthew says, so it can be assumed that any actual account of the resurrection was not believed by anyone of the world. (cf. Matthew 28:11-15) To the world, it seemed, Jesus was still dead and it had won the victory.

So, the world would continue its mockery of the followers of Jesus. It does its hardest to prove the foolishness of being a follower of one who is dead. It points to physical death as the proof that Jesus' death and supposed resurrection did nothing. It will claim that illness and disease are proof that Jesus had no power to save. He was just a raving lunatic or a radical teacher, in its estimation. The fact that bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people is enough proof to the world to claim that there is no God. And their litany of proofs for a powerless Jesus and non-existent God go on and on and on. You live, you die, that's it...it's completely logical.

The world would seek proof and tangible evidence for a living Jesus—His absence is enough to prove that He did not rise from the grave. "Show me Jesus," they would say, "You can't because He never was God as you claim that He is. He is still dead and decaying somewhere." By their logic, you could respond, "Show me the body." And they can't. Still, the proclaim a false victory, wagging the tongue at the followers of the Risen and Ascended Jesus, causing weeping and lamenting.

And that leaves us right where we started this morning in this sermon. Celebration is short-lived. There will be weeping and lamenting and sorrow. You cannot get past that.

The world is hell-bent on destruction and wants to take you along for the ride. Their arguments

are logically convincing; you have little else than the Word to counter them, and every time you use it, it seems to fall on deaf ears. And there's that little voice inside that is always nagging at you, trying to convince you that what you believe and confess is false and useless. You are madly attacked on all sides, from within and without—by the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh—to the point where you would fall on our knees and cry out, "WHERE IS GOD?"

O little flock, fear not the foe which madly seeks your overthrow; dread not his rage and power. What though your courage sometimes faints, his seeming triumph over God's saints lasts but a little hour. As true as God's own Word is true, not earth nor hell with all their crew against us shall prevail. A jest and byword are they grown; God is with us, we are His own; our victory cannot fail.

"As true as God's own Word is true," so let us return to the Word from before this morning's Gospel: I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15)

Or, as Jesus says in another part of St. John's Gospel:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (John 14:16-20)

God the Father certainly did win a victory over the devil, crushing his head and removing all authority from him through the person of His Son. God the Son won the same victory over the world, being the propitiation for the world's sin (and for yours). Now, dear hearers, let me tell you how God wages battle against the third "person" of the unholy triumvirate. He sends the Helper, the Comforter, the Counselor—the Spirit of truth.

As Jesus said before this morning's Gospel: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." (John 16:7) Because He goes, He sends the Helper—the Holy Spirit. This is the gift given to each of you as you have been Baptized into Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, for there you received the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, having been Baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. "[Y]ou know Him," Jesus declares, "for He dwells with you and will be in you." He is with you and in you to help and comfort you, to combat against your sinful flesh.

How? Jesus said, "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." He will take from what is of Jesus, and declare it to you—He declares Jesus to you. He is always at work to do this, never seeking glory for Himself, but doing it to the glory of Jesus Christ who sent Him. It is Christ and His work that He proclaims, and He does this through means—the Word and the Sacraments.

That is what is of Jesus Christ! He is the Word. All that is written in the Holy Scriptures is Him. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers to put to paper that which is Jesus; now, that same Spirit works through that means—the written Word of God, which is Jesus Christ—to give you that Word—to give

you Jesus Christ. You have the Word of God, by way of the Holy Spirit, to combat the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh. These say that God does not exist; by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God, you hear God say, I AM. These say that God is a distant god who doesn't care for His creation; by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God, you hear God say, "I am with you always to the very end of the age." (cf. Matthew 28:20) These say that God does not love you; by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God, you hear God say, "I loved the world and you to the point of sending the Son in the flesh to die for the world and you, that whoever believes in Him should not perish have life everlasting." (cf. John 3:16)

Your sinful flesh doesn't like this, but it doesn't have the power to overcome it. Jesus Christ is the light of the world, St. John tells us, the light no darkness can overcome. (cf. John 1:5) He is the light that scatters all darkness, St. Paul tells us (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6); therefore, the Helper dwells within you so that the Word would scatter the darkness of your sinful flesh.

In the second place, that which is of Christ that the Spirit declares to us is the work which Christ accomplished by His death and resurrection. Namely, this is forgiveness, life, and salvation. Rev. Peter Bender, once wrote, "Wherever the words of Jesus are, there is the Holy Spirit to give us life through the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name."¹ Not only does the Spirit open your hearts and minds to hear Jesus, but He does more to battle against your sinful flesh: He really and truly gives what the Word declares. The Spirit takes from what is Christ's and gives it to you, quite literally.

Once again, your sinful flesh doesn't like this, but it doesn't have the power to overcome it. Your sinful flesh only takes from you; it doesn't give anything to you. It robs you of life—the wages of sin is death—and constantly reminds you of it. You grow faint and ill, and these are symptoms of your sinful flesh at work against you—symptoms your own sinful flesh will use to convince you that God is not for you, that God has condemned you.

Not the Holy Spirit, however. He wages battle against your sinful flesh, not taking away from you, but giving to you. Your flesh says you are a gross sinner and you are dying for it; by the power of the Holy Spirit, giving what the Son of God has won, it is declared to you by God and His Word that you are forgiven for all of your sins. Not only does the Word declare this to you, and your hearts and minds are open to hear it by the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit takes from the Word and really and truly gives what the Word says: forgiveness of sins. And if you are forgiven for all of your sins, then you also have life and salvation.

Therefore, we celebrate...we continue to celebrate and always celebrate. Though the world around us is decaying and destroying itself, though it appears as if the devil is having his way, though our sinful flesh rages against us, **we are of Christ**. That is cause for celebration!

You are Baptized into the name of the Triune God, and through Baptism you have been crucified with Christ, therefore it is no longer you who live, but Christ lives in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. The life which you now live in the flesh you live by faith, (cf. Galatians 2:20) God-given faith by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loves you and gave Himself for you and now lives and reigns with the Father. Therefore you celebrate, because the Holy Spirit gives you this which is of Christ: you are forgiven for all of your sins!

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

1 [Lutheran Catechesis](#), The Sacrament of the Altar