

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter May 7-8, 2011**

1 Peter 1:17-25 "Christ Is Risen! This is Most Certainly True – for You!"

I'm sure glad to see you today. There are millions of people in the world who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, but you have come to know Jesus this way. Some of you were brought to church by your mother and father to be baptized as infants, and you grew up knowing Jesus Christ as Lord; others of you came to know Jesus Christ through the witness of a friend, family member, or a business associate. Because of our relationship to God in Christ, we might sometimes take for granted the fact that we have this knowledge and wonder why there are other people in the world who do not worship as we do. It is very possible that many of these people grew up in homes where there was a very loose relationship to the Christian Church, very anti-Christian sentiment, or just a lack of knowledge of spiritual things when it comes to Jesus Christ. The fact is that people live every day in spiritual exile from God because of their sins, and they need to be taught that we are ransomed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. When we come to know Christ in this way, and when we understand that it is impossible for other people to naturally come to know Christ without our witness and guidance, then we can offer ourselves to the world as spiritual mentors and guides to lead others to Jesus Christ.

The Bible makes it clear that people live in spiritual exile due to their sins. In the 1 Peter reading today, people are compared to grass and flowers which last for a little while in beauty, but which later fade and fall. Of course, in the beginning God created Adam and Eve in spiritual perfection. They were holy and perfect because they were created in God's Image, and they enjoyed very close and personal fellowship with God when they were in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve's disobedience, we read that God was walking in the garden and coming to Adam and Eve. It suggests a very close fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God until their disobedience, because all that changed after God confronted them with their sin. Adam and Eve spiritually died that day, and we with them. This spiritual death tore apart the close fellowship they had enjoyed with God up until then. Their punishment was to be cast out of the Garden of Eden, and ever since then people have been in spiritual exile from God.

We have come to know the risen Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and we have also learned to call upon God as our Father in heaven. Even so, we continue to live in exile from God until we will finally leave this life and come to God in heaven. In the meanwhile, there are people in this world who do not know God as their Father. They can speak about a "higher power" or someone who is responsible for this world's creation. They can sometimes even identify this person as God, but they can never know God as Father until they know his Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, while we ourselves may no longer live in spiritual exile from God because we have received forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ, there are many people in this world who do not know Jesus Christ in this way, and so they remain in spiritual exile from God.

In the Gospel reading today which takes place on the evening of the first Easter, the risen Jesus Christ meets two of his disciples who are on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but they do not recognize Jesus. They are very upset about Jesus' death, and they don't know what to make of the curious story they have heard from the women that Jesus is alive again. So while Jesus walks with these disciples to Emmaus, he walks them through the Old Testament, showing them that it was necessary that Jesus die and rise again. The first place he would have begun would be in Genesis 3 which tells about the fall into sin, but which also first tells the good news of a child who would be

born into this world and later destroy our enemy, the devil. This word of hope was fulfilled when Christ came into the world, true God begotten of the Father from eternity, and true man born of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus walked these disciples through the Old Testament so that they could see that the Messiah must suffer for our sins, die, and rise again from the dead. He would have gone through many of the same stories that many mothers teach their own children as they grow up in the family. Christian mothers and fathers teach their children about God and Jesus to the best of their ability. Some mothers may use Bible story books to teach their children so that they grow up learning to know and love Jesus. My own mother taught me to pray to God. She kneeled with me beside my bedside before I went to bed. She also took me to church with her every Sunday until the age of 5, at which time I began to go with my father to his Lutheran Church. If you grew up in a Christian household, maybe you remember similar experiences with your own mother as you were growing up.

Sometimes mothers and fathers wish they had done things differently, and to them there is the word of comfort that Peter writes about the Savior Jesus who forgives our sins. The wonderful good news for all of us today is that, although we come into this world spiritually poor because of our sins, "you were," in the words of St. Peter:

*"(You were) ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. "*

You have the entire forgiveness of your sins because Jesus Christ came into our world as the Messiah to destroy our enemy, the devil. Jesus paid the debt we owed God because of our sin – "not with gold or silver, but with his holy and precious blood, and innocent suffering and death, so that I can be his own, live under his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." He died for our sins at the cross, and he rose again on the third day. This is most certainly true! Christ is risen!

Since we have been raised with Christ, and since we are born again through the Word of Christ, we do not need to be satisfied with who we once were. Rather, we can become all that God would have us be in Jesus Christ. We have been born again through the baptism waters and God's Word in Christ to become God's dear children. Mothers and fathers who bring their children to the waters of baptism make possible their children being born again in forgiveness and with the Holy Spirit. All who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are born again and changed. We hold out God's love to a world which is in exile from God. What are some things we can show love to our world?

We can volunteer in support of our church's ministries, so that we can touch the lives of those who are coming into our church, and so that we can encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ at St. Paul's.

We can recommit ourselves to weekly worship and Bible Study so that we can personally grow in deeper and richer faith and be better prepared to share our hope in Christ with others.

We can teach the children about Jesus at home and at church. We can bring the children to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. We can browse His Way Christian Bookstore's shelves or our Concordia Publishing House website or the church library for helpful Christian books, videos, and

music. We can volunteer with the education programs of our congregation to encourage our children and youth.

We can offer our Savior to those who don't have saving faith in Jesus Christ by telling them about Jesus, inviting them to church or a church activity where they can hear the Gospel, and including them in settings with other Christians. In this way we can become spiritual mentors and guides to those who need to learn about Jesus.

And we, as God's children, can be open to the guidance our spiritual mother and fathers give to us.

When we know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, then it is natural to give thanks that God sent his Son to redeem us with Christ's precious blood shed for our sins. We also come to realize that there are still many people in the world who do not understand or know about the joy we have in the risen Christ. We can be the feet that go to where spiritual work is needed, the hands that show Christ's love, and the words that speak forgiveness and comfort. We do this because Christ is risen!

*soli deo gloria*