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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Fifth Sunday of Easter (Series A)

May 14, 2017

Text: John 14:1–14

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

Jesus said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (vs. 1). Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us a wonderful promise and a glorious invitation in these words. The invitation: saving faith in Jesus as God and man. The promise: untroubled hearts. Today’s sermon, simply put, is about Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, who gives untroubled hearts to men, women, and children, through His divine work of grace.

Isn’t every sermon supposed to be about Jesus, you might ask? Yes. But this sermon will be about Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, who makes the unthinkable claim to be God. As you believe in God believe also in Me. Jesus says these words after He and His disciples had eaten their last Passover meal.

When Jesus says “Believe in God,” He is referring to the God of the OT. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who created the heavens and the earth by the power of His Word; the God who revealed Himself in the burning bush as Yahweh, the great I Am. The disciples knew Mary, Jesus’ mother. Surely they heard stories about Joseph, His stepfather. They knew His brethren and had been to His hometown. It’s quite likely they had been to His home in Nazareth, possibly even stayed in His house! They saw Him eat and sleep and walk and do everything that every other man does. This Man invites them to believe that He is Yahweh, the Great I Am of the Scriptures! Believe in God; believe also in me.

To be sure, the disciples witness the miracles He performed – many were of the kind that had never been heard of; not one of the OT prophets had raised someone who had been dead 4 days; never had anyone healed a man born blind. Had anyone ever walked on water and calmed a raging storm, at the same time? This Man – as remarkable as He is – claims to be God!

“Believe in God; believe also in me.” By offering such an invitation, the Lord claims to be worthy of the confidence that can only be placed in God. The hope you have in God, place it in Me. The joy that comes from knowing God, experience it in Me. The grace and love you find in God the Father, find it in Me. For “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him” (vs. 6–7).

With these words, Jesus claims that we cannot have faith in the Father *except* through Jesus, the man born to Mary in Bethlehem! This Jesus is the way to the Father. Jesus, Son of God and Mary, is the truth that reveals the Father. Jesus, God and man in one person, is the life that originates in the Father.

People of God, everything depends on knowing Jesus rightly, to cling to Him alone in faith according to His gracious invitation. It’s as if we should say something like this, “My Lord Jesus invites me to trust and know Him even as I know and trust in God the Father. In divine matters, I want to know nothing except my Lord Christ: He alone must be everything that concerns my salvation. And though I experience many trials and much opposition on the part of the devil, the world, and my own conscience, and must suffer even death because of this confidence, I will still take my stand here. I am determined to live and die in this Christian faith.” This dear saints of God, is knowing Christ rightly. And knowing Christ rightly, as the God-man, you know and possess the Father almighty!! (loose paraphrase of Martin Luther, LW 24:55).

But wait! The invitation to have faith in Jesus, the God-man, gets even richer. Jesus answers Philip’s request to see the Father with these marvelous words, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves” (vs. 9–11).

Whenever we read and hear about the words and works of Jesus, we should automatically understand them to be the words and works of the Father. When Christ Jesus declares that He loves His people unto the end and no one can take them out of His hands, we should also understand that God the Father loves us to the end and no one can take us out of His hands. Does not Jesus say, “The words I say, are the Father’s words. The works I do are the Father’s work. Whatever I do for your present and eternal good, My Father does for I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.”

The reason we must know Jesus rightly is that the promise of untroubled hearts (vs. 1) is established upon the truth that Jesus and the Father share the same divine essence, though they are distinct persons. How can we have untroubled hearts in the midst of a very troubled world, "...I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (vs. 2b-3).

There are three divine works of grace described in those two verses: 1) Jesus prepares a place specifically for each of you, 2) Jesus will return to bring you unto Himself, and 3) you will be with Jesus for all time. As Jesus speaks those words of grace to you, so speaks the Father. As Jesus does the work necessary to bring us to our heavenly home, so the Father works likewise. To be sure, the Father does not suffer and die on the cross; that is the work specifically given to the Lord Jesus. But the Father receives this death for the redemption of the world and is reconciled to the world through His Son. Therefore we can and must say, "God was crucified and died for me" for Jesus is of one essence with the Father (paraphrase from Martin Luther, LW 24:99). We must rightly and boldly confess that the Father is thoroughly pleased with us through His Son and consequently prepares a place for each of us, brings us unto Himself, and will be with us forever. Untroubled hearts say "yes" to that divine work of grace.

Speaking of doing divine work ...did you hear what kind of things Jesus says His people will do after He ascends back to His Father? Vs. 12-14, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

Through faith in the Lord Jesus, we continue and increase His work of bringing the world unto the Father. Think of it like this...In His perfect life, death, and resurrection, Jesus accomplishes the salvation of the world. God and man are forever reconciled. The work is done. But if that work goes unknown, it will all be for nothing. The cross and resurrection of Jesus must be preached! Sacraments must be rightly administered. Intercessory prayers must be made (c.p. Romans 10:14-15). For once a Christian begins to know Christ as His Lord Savior, God completely permeates His heart. Now he is eager to help everyone acquire the same benefits. For his greatest delight is in this treasure, the knowledge of Christ. Therefore he steps forth boldly, teaches and admonishes others, praises and confesses his treasure before everybody, prays and yearns that they, too, may obtain such mercy. A Christian

cannot be still or idle. He constantly strives and struggles with all his might to disseminate God's honor and glory among the people. For wherever the Father and Christ reside, there one dares to pray. For prayer is the true work characteristic of Christians (loose paraphrase of Martin Luther, LW 24:87-88).

It is no overstatement to say that Christians alone stand as mediators in this world. For we declare that Jesus, the divine Son of Mary, is the way, the truth, and the life. Our very lives are an act of prayer offered up to the world in Jesus' name.

Dear mothers, what could be more pleasing to your heavenly Father than to pray to Him for the present and eternal wellbeing of your children and grandchildren, your family and Church, your country and world? This is the work Jesus gives you to do, in His name. With untroubled hearts established in the love of the Father and the Son, rejoice in the knowledge that the Lord Jesus continues His work of grace in your lives. "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (vs. 13)

*(MaKenzie Loy's baptism...)*

People of God, this work is given to all of us: man, woman, and child. The authority of the Father and the Son stand behind it. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.