

# Sermon for The Second Sunday of Easter

**Date:** April 11, 2021

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

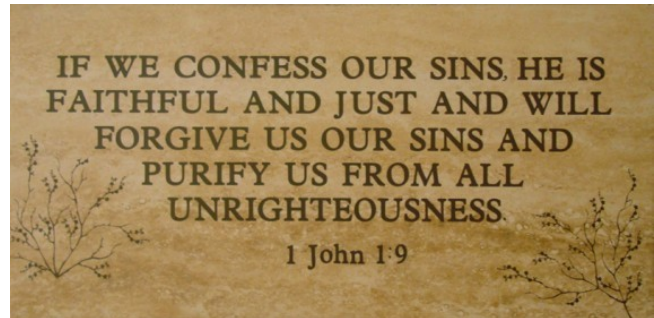
**First Reading:** Acts 4:32-35

**Epistle Reading:** 1 John 1:1-2:2

**Gospel Reading:** John 20:19-31

**Sermon Text:** John 20:19-31

**Sermon Title:** Toward the Forgiveness of Sin



**Introit:** Psalm 105:1-5,8; Antiphon: 1 Peter 2:2-3

## Hymns:

LSB 464 – The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done

LSB 470 – O Sons and Daughters of the King

LSB 467 – Awake, My Heart, with Gladness

## Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

## Songs:

Forgive our Sins as We Forgive

Broken Things

Forgiveness – Matthew West

Way Maker

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 20:19–31

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

The Holy Spirit alighted on Jesus at His Baptism. From then on, everyone is to know that Jesus is about the business of fulfilling all righteousness.<sup>1</sup> In this fulfilling of all righteousness every sinner will be justified, declared righteous. As John the Baptist proclaims, Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Everything about Jesus: His teaching, His miracles, His eating and drinking with sinners, His suffering and death, it's all part of God's plan and Jesus' work to provide the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus arrives it is to give gifts to sinners. When Jesus arrives His desire is to cast down all self-justification (the work of the Law) so that sinners may hear His word of cleansing, repentance and salvation, the Gospel. It is certainly true in what we read today. In that room where the disciples were hiding in fear. Jesus Enters the room to forgive sins, to give the Holy Spirit, to install faith.

It is the evening of Easter Sunday. Jesus is risen! Yet the apostles cower in a locked room. They belong to the Lord. They bear His name. They are already clean because of the word Jesus has spoken to them.<sup>3</sup> They should be rejoicing! Yet at the same time they live in a world affected by sin.

The apostles are in a locked room in fear of the Temple authority, the teachers of the Law. The Law locks people in fear. It exposes your sin. It shows how evil we truly are. The Law accuses the old Adam in us and guilt and fear of punishment prevail. Even in the Church the old Adam, the old sinful flesh, can hold people in their sins, keeping people locked in fear.

Then Jesus enters the room. His Word is spoken, the room that was once filled with fear is now full of forgiveness. There is the gift of peace. This peace that flows from the verdict of "not guilty" spoken at the throne of heaven.<sup>4</sup> The verdict that declares the sinner justified in heaven is now spoken by the Lord, on earth. "Peace to you."<sup>5</sup> Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and for the sinner, that is the Good News of the Gospel.

There is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the

1 Matthew 3:15

2 John 1:29

3 John 15:3

4 Zechariah 3:1-10

5 John 20:19

one true faith.<sup>6</sup>” There is the gift of the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness is a spoken and accomplished fact, delivered to the ears of sinners.

Faith is, in this room, the destroyer of fear. The fear brought by the Law, which accuses, is now replaced by the faith ushered in by the Gospel, which brings freedom. It is a new “mountain top” experience, better than the Transfiguration. There the disciples were in fear and didn’t know what to say.<sup>7</sup> Now they are set free from fear.

The apostles did not stay in the room. Jesus sent them out, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.<sup>8</sup>” The gift of the forgiveness through repentance, the gift of the Holy Spirit and of faith is brought into the world of sinners. The Word of Jesus’ salvation through the crucifixion and resurrection is proclaimed. Sinners are gathered into the Church. The Church is built upon the Gospel.

The Confessions explain:

God is super-abundantly generous in His grace: First, through the spoken Word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world. This is the particular office of the Gospel. Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren.<sup>9</sup>

Where this Gospel is preached, where repentance is proclaimed from the heart, there sins are forgiven, and there is salvation for the sinner. “For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.<sup>10</sup>”

So:

Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered toward this goal: We shall daily receive in the Church nothing but the forgiveness of sin... For we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but continuous, uninterrupted forgiveness of sin.<sup>11</sup>

6 Small Catechism, Third Article

7 Matthew 17:4

8 John 20:21

9 Smalcald Articles III IV

10 Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar

11 Large Catechism II 55

That was then. 2,000 years ago. Our Confessions and the Reformation was 500 years ago. What does that have to do with today? In my Confirmation classes I will refer to the “old dusty books”: The Bible, the Book of Concord, the Catechism, the Lutheran Book of Prayer, the Hymnal. They’re old. The language is not entirely like the way we speak everyday. They are sometimes clumsy and even at times difficult to understand. They are “old dusty books.” What do they have for us today?

They have the same thing they had when they were first written down: Forgiveness, and freedom. This is the foundation upon which the Holy Christian Church is built. Without forgiveness there is no salvation. Without repentance there is no forgiveness.

During Holy Week you heard Jesus’ death and resurrection was for all people. Even for the most horrid person you can imagine. Jesus died for the soldiers, for Pilate, for Judas, and for you. Jesus’ death and resurrection pays the price for all sin. If that is true, do all people get to heaven? The very sad answer is: No.

The answer is, “no” because all of that wonder, all of that freedom, all of that marvelous gift comes to a person by means; by a vehicle. The Bible is the vehicle by which God’s Holy Sacred Word comes to us. The water of Holy Baptism is the vehicle by which we receive the right to be called children of God. The bread and wine are the vehicle by which we receive Jesus’ true body and blood. In these things we find forgiveness offered, paid for in full, and available to all. That forgiveness comes on the vehicle of repentance.

That is why each worship service, like this one, begins with confessing our sins. If we say we are pure, if we say we are clean, if we believe we have done no wrong, “we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”<sup>12</sup> “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”<sup>13</sup> That, however, is not an excuse for a lack of repentance. It is not an excuse for not admitting your sin. To say, “everyone sins” is not an excuse for sin. Or maybe it is better understood as only an excuse for sin. It is not forgiveness. It is not payment. It is not removal of that sin. Trying to justify your sin or excuse your sin is not repentance.

Repentance is a thing that often elitists fear. It is that innate fear of the Law that still permeates our very being, as it has since Adam walked out of Eden.<sup>14</sup> It can be the most difficult thing to do. As you ponder admitting your own failing, Satan will chime in. His name means ‘accuser’ and that is what he does. He’ll tempt you to

<sup>12</sup> 1 John 1:8

<sup>13</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 3:8

think: If I admit it I'll get in trouble. If I declare it, they will know I'm not the person I pretend to be. Satan is the father of lies<sup>15</sup> and he will provoke you to believe you can live in the lie and still win. After all, everybody sins.

“If we say we are without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.<sup>16</sup>” Satan does not want you to know the truth. He likes you locked in your fear of the Law, because there he still has power and control over you. There you are still his.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus has come to set the prisoner free.<sup>18</sup> That freedom comes on the vehicle of repentance. It means standing before the Throne of God, and before your brother or sister in faith and admitting you are wrong; admitting you have done wrong; admitting you have failed to be what others, and God, expect you to be.

That would seem a terrible thing to do, but once it is done. Once we face our fears, in faith, and admit our sin, freedom comes. It comes like a flood. It comes as a lavish washing of our sins. Freedom comes.

“If we say we are without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.<sup>19</sup>” Jesus is, “the way the truth and the life.”<sup>20</sup> If the Truth is not in you, Jesus is not in you. If Jesus is not in you you have no salvation.<sup>21</sup> “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”<sup>22</sup> “Thank God that He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**



15 John 8:44  
16 1 John 1:8  
17 John 8:44  
18 Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18  
19 1 John 1:8  
20 John 14:6  
21 John 6:53-58  
22 1 Corinthians 15:17  
23 1 Corinthians 15:57