

Lent Vespers 4

10 April 2011

Concordia Lutheran Mission

Terrebonne, Oregon

**“The Risen and Exalted Christ Gathers His Church
through His Own Preaching to Men through the
Word and the Sacraments.”**

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.”

Psalm 22:22

Introduction

One of the excuses in our day for not going to Church is that nobody goes anymore. Nobody? Is Jesus nobody?

But what do you mean? I mean, Jesus goes to Church. So, is Jesus a nobody?

But how can one say Jesus goes to Church? He can say Jesus goes to Church because Jesus says He does in **Psalm 22** when He says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.”¹

Through the Word and the Sacraments, it is the risen and exalted Jesus Himself who declares the Name of the Lord and, thereby, brings men into His Church and makes them His brothers.²

¹**Verse 22.**

After recounting His deep and profound suffering and agony for our sins, Christ in this verse immediately speaks of His resurrection and exaltation in order to absolve, justify, and preach the Gospel to men and, thereby, gather His Church.

I. Christ Rises from the Dead after His Suffering of Body and Soul and is Exalted.

A. Christ is risen from the dead.

Over half of **Psalm 22** reveals in vivid detail the suffering in body and soul Christ endured in order to atone for our sins. But once His Work is completed³, He leaves behind this suffering and rises from the dead. David records Christ's words:

²“It is the delivered, the victorious Messiah who speaks in the last part of the psalm. The dawn of salvation has arisen upon the hind that was pursued. Christ, the Messiah, risen from the dead, is now enthroned at the right hand of God, while He is at the same time in the midst of His brethren, in the glorious Word of the Gospel. Those who believe in Him are the congregation of Jehovah, and their songs of praise rise in honor of His redemption.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament, Volume II, The Poetical and the Prophetical Books*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, p. 80.

³“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” **St. Matthew 19:30.**

Notice here that *Christ endures the wrath of God before dying*. Death means the settling in of God's abiding wrath. “And death itself serves this purpose, namely, to abolish this flesh of sin, that we may rise absolutely new. Neither is there now in the death of the believer, since

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.⁴

This work is the work of no dead man, but someone vital and alive. In the previous verses, as we have seen, Christ was suffering the pangs of death and hell. Again, David records Jesus' words:

... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ... thou hast brought me into the dust of death.⁵

But now Christ is speaking of declaring the Lord's Name in the midst of God's congregation. Christ, therefore, is not doing the work of a dead man, but of a man living, indeed, of one risen from the dead. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

by faith he has overcome the terrors of death, that sting and sense of wrath of which Paul speaks 1 Cor. 15, 56: *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law.* This strength of sin, this sense of wrath, is truly punishment as long as it is present; without this sense of wrath, death is not properly punishment." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VI: Of Confession and Satisfaction.* 56. 57, *Triglotta*, p. 299. But Christ has already endured the wrath of God before His death and ended it. *Christ, therefore, through the Cross transformed death into mere sleep.* For Christ awakened from death when He rose again the third day. So for all who die in Christ, death is not longer death, but mere sleep; for we shall all awaken and arise on the last day when Christ returns again in glory.

⁴**Psalm 22:22.**

⁵**Psalm 22:1, 15.**

That Christ through suffering should enter glory is taught in Ps. 22. God has not scoffed at the misery of this Poor Soul, nor did He hide His face from Him. He heard Him; He raised Him again from the dust of death and exalted Him.⁶

B. Christ is exalted and governs all things for the sake of His Church.

And, as Dr. Stoeckhardt has noted, not only does **Psalm 22** speak of Christ's resurrection from the dead after His suffering for the sins of the world, but also His exaltation. In Catechism we learned that Christ's exaltation is:

Wherein does Christ's State of Exaltation consist?

Christ's State of Exaltation consists in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ *always and fully uses* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature. ... God also *hath highly exalted Him* and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *Phil. 2:9-11.*⁷

Christ's exaltation after His suffering is a great comfort because it reveals to us that Christ has indeed conquered our foes of sin and God's wrath and overcome death. And because He has done that, we know

⁶*Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 85.

⁷*The Small Catechism*, p. 116, question 148.

that He lives and governs all things for our benefit. Again, we learned in Catechism:

What comfort do you derive from Christ's sitting on the right hand of God? We derive the comfort that it is the *exalted* Christ who – A. As our *Prophet sends men* to preach the Gospel of redemption; ... B. As our *Priest intercedes* (pleads) for us before God; ... C. As our *King governs and protects His Church* and as Head of the Church *rules the world* in the interest of the Church.⁸

Christ's exaltation here hard on the heels of His suffering is great comfort for it shows that He has overcome completely, convincingly, and resoundingly, sin, the powers of darkness, and the wrath of God, and now governs all things for the sake of His Church.

II. The Risen and Exalted Christ Gathers His Church, His Brethren, through His Own Preaching through the Word and the Sacraments.

A. Christ Himself proclaims the Gospel through His Word and Sacraments.

And notice, Christ does not stop working after His resurrection, exaltation, and session at the Right Hand of God, but continues to work in behalf of men because He says He will proclaim the Lord's Name to His brethren. David writes:

⁸*The Small Catechism*, p. 121, question 155.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.⁹

This work of Preaching the Gospel is another powerful indication of His exaltation and session at the Right Hand of God, for this is His work as our Priest¹⁰ after his resurrection, exaltation, and session of the Right hand of God¹¹. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

⁹**Psalm 22:22.**

¹⁰“This therefore according to Old Testament prophecy is God’s counsel, will, and arrangement, a part of the loving counsel of God, whose purpose was the salvation of mankind. God’s entire plan of salvation, the salvation in Christ, the perfect grace of the New Testament, is contained in the Word and is imputed to mankind through the preaching of the Word. And it is a part of the office of Christ, the Mediator of salvation, Himself to offer and proffer to mankind through the Word that He has won for sinful mankind, Himself to dispense in His Church among men the blessings of salvation.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 102, 103.

¹¹“Because after His ascent Christ sat down at the right hand of God, being present everywhere and ruling powerfully, therefore He was able to be present with the apostles everywhere and to work with them as they preached the Gospel, by virtue and power of His sitting at the infinite right hand of God. ‘Christ ascended above all the heavens to fill all things. And He gave some prophets, others apostles, other evangelists, others teachers, that the saints might be prepared for the work of the ministry’ (Eph. 4:10-12). Thus the fruit of the Lord’s ascension is the establishment and preservation of the ministry. Therefore as He ascended into heaven according to His human nature, so also He instituted and preserves the ministry according to the human

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ....¹²

It is not the pastor, then, who preaches to us on Sunday, but rather Christ Himself, for David says that Christ will declare the Lord's Name in the midst of the congregation. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

These thoughts, so vigorously pursued in the writings of the prophets, and then also expressed in the New Testament, e.g. in Eph. 2, 17, that Christ, who is exalted at the right hand of God, nevertheless, is close by and present with His Church on earth and speaks to her through the

nature. Here we should place the prophecies of the Old Testament. Ps. 22:[22]: 'I shall tell Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the Church I shall praise You.' That is, 'Freed from suffering and death, I shall establish and preserve the ministry of the Word, through which the benefits from My suffering and death are distributed in the Church.' Isa. 53:10: 'When He sets down His soul for sin, He will see His long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord will be directed in His hand.'" The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, pp.246, 247.

¹²**Ephesians 4:8, 11-13.**

preaching of the Word, these thoughts the preachers of the New Testament should inculcate well in the members of their congregations. They should declare to them: The Gospel is not just the preaching about Christ but the preaching of Christ Himself. We are not the ones who are speaking, but Christ is speaking through us and thereby bestows upon you all the good things about which we are telling you.¹³

And, indeed, it must be Christ preaching; for who is vast and powerful enough to preach God's Word in the Church of God, scattered all across the earth, in every congregation, every Sunday, everywhere, all the time, at the same time, but the Omnipotent and Omnipresent God Himself, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?¹⁴ *Hence, we see that Jesus is in Church every Sunday, preaching the Gospel to us and all Christians throughout the world.*

It is Christ Himself, then, who is preaching the Gospel to us every Sunday through His Word and Sacraments.

B. Christ saves men through His Preaching of the Gospel in the Word and the Sacraments.

¹³*Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 102.

¹⁴Gerhard, p. 246, on Matthew 28.

And, as Dr. Stoeckhardt notes, Christ bestows blessings through His preaching of the Gospel in the Word and the Sacraments¹⁵. Again, Dr. Stoeckhardt writes of these blessings:

The Son of David speaks of the righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness of God in which He shares. However, what happened to Him, the promised Redeemer, occurred for men's benefit. Consequently, He speaks also of God's salvation which is meant for mankind. And since He does not speak simply about righteousness but "preaches the righteousness", *He imputes to sinners the righteousness of which they have need.*¹⁶

And this justification by the declaration of the Gospel is exactly what the prophet Isaiah teaches elsewhere. Isaiah writes:

¹⁵The Gospel is the Word and the Sacraments. "But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e. of the Gospel and the Sacraments.* And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass, Of the Term Mass.*80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411.

¹⁶*Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 102.

He shall see the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.¹⁷

We are justified by faith through the hearing of the Gospel. And faith saves. Christ, therefore, by preaching the Gospel in our midst, absolves us of sin, declares us righteous, and saves. For when people hear that God has declared them righteous already, even before they were born, before the foundation of the world¹⁸, for Christ's sake, then the hearts rejoice, faith having been created in their hearts, and men, thereby, justified and saved. The Lutheran Church confesses:

Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17. For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution [*i.e.*, the promise of divine grace] is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God [here on earth sins are truly canceled also before God in heaven] according to Luke 10, 16: *He that heareth you heareth Me*. Wherefore the voice of one absolving must be

¹⁷**Isaiah 53:11.**

¹⁸“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” **Ephesians 1:4.**

believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven.¹⁹

C. Men become God's brothers through Christ's preaching of the Gospel.

And how much closer could someone be to God than to have God call him His brother? Yet, that's what Jesus calls His Church, i.e. Christians; He calls us His brothers. David writes:

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.²⁰

Through the Word and the Sacraments, Christ not only draws near to us, speaks to us, and saves us, but He also makes us closer to God than anyone or anything can: He makes us God's brothers and heirs with Him in God's eternal Kingdom. Luther writes:

That we should be called children of God. It is not enough to say that we are friends. No, John says that we are called children of God. This love could not have been expressed more emphatically. Moreover, we are called children and brothers by God Himself. Ps. 22:22 says: "I will tell of Thy name to My brethren." Likewise Matt. 28:10: "Tell My brethren." And in Rom. 8:17 we read: "And if children, then heirs and fellow heirs with Christ." It is not enough that we become children of God, but because of this name we should

¹⁹*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.).*39-40, p. 261.

²⁰**Psalm 22:22.**

also become renowned in the sight of God and the angels. But why do we have this name? Because of the love of God.²¹

²¹*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 265, 266. Again, Luther writes: "But all this is said to Christians for the purpose of giving them the boldness and the confidence to rely on this Man and to pray with complete assurance; for we hear that in this way He unites us with Himself, really puts us on a par with Him, and merges our praying into His and His into ours. Christians can glory in this great distinction. For if our prayers are included in His, then He says (Ps. 22:22): 'I will tell of Thy name to My brethren' and (Rom. 8:16–17) 'It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.' What greater honor could be paid us than this, that our faith in Christ entitles us to be called His brethren and coheirs, that our prayer is to be like His, that there is really no difference except that our prayers must originate in Him and be spoken in His name if they are to be acceptable and if He is to bestow this inheritance and glory on us. Aside from this, He makes us equal to Himself in all things; His and our prayer must be one, ... just as His body is ours and His members are ours. Thus St. Paul says in Eph. 5:30: 'We are members of His body,' of His flesh and bone. To give them greater comfort, Christ must remind His disciples of this glory in these last words of His; but He must do so by telling them that everything hinges on their belief that He was sent for this purpose in accordance with God's counsel and will, in order that they may pray confidently in His name and do everything Christians should do. For this dare not be omitted or forgotten. Other wise they would pray and worship no differently from the way the Turks and the heathen do." *Luther's Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 407, 408.

Again, Luther writes: "Moreover, we are not only his children, but also his brothers, as he says in Psalm 22 [:22]: 'I will tell of thy name to

Conclusion

Christ draws close to us every Sunday in Church to preach the Gospel to us through the Word and the Sacraments to save us.

And through this preaching He not only saves us, but establishes an eternal relationship: He makes us His brothers. And not only brothers does He make us, but heirs in His everlasting Kingdom.

Amen.

my brethren,' and in the Gospel of Matthew: 'Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and my sister, and my mother' [12:50]. So we are not only true clerics and priests according to our right as children but also according to our right as brothers. This, our hereditary priesthood with which we are born, we do not want to have taken away, impeded and obscured; rather, we want to have it brought out into the open, proclaimed and extolled with all its honors in order that it should beam and shine like the precious sun and blind the eyes of the devil and his hypocrisies and abominations...." *Luther's Works*, Vol. 38, pp. 187, 188.

