

The Festival of Easter
20 April 2014
Concordia Lutheran Mission
Terrebonne, Oregon

“In Christ All Men are Raised to Life Eternal and the Resurrection of the Body.”

Colossians 3:1

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Introduction

Christ rose from the dead 2000 years ago. How can the Apostle St. Paul say we're risen with Christ? We are risen with Christ through the Gospel. Through the Gospel Christ's Rising from the Dead for us becomes our possession by faith.

Christ went to the grave for our sins. Because He went to the grave for our sins, His Resurrection from the dead cannot mean anything else other than He is Absolved of our sins reckoned by God to Him so we would not perish in our sins. And because He is Absolved of our sins, we, too, are Absolved of our sins.¹

This Absolution Christ gives to us in Holy Baptism. Hence, Holy Baptism raises us to newness of life, eternal life, here on earth and now. Because Holy Baptism raises us to life eternal, Holy Baptism also gives us the resurrection of the body on the Last Day when Christ returns again in glory.

¹“Now, then, if the Father raised Christ from the dead, He, by this glorious resurrection act, declared that the sins of the whole world are fully expiated, or atoned for, and that all mankind is now regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal. This gracious reconciliation and justification is clearly taught in Rom. 4:25: ‘Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.’ ... This truth Dr. Walther stressed anew in America. He taught that the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the *actual absolution pronounced upon all sinners*. ... Calov, following Gerhard, rightly points out the relation of Christ's resurrection to our justification as follows: ‘Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin. ... As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him.’” *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 321.

In Christ, all men are raised to life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

I. Christ's Resurrection Absolves of Sin and, thereby, Gives Newness of Life.

A. Men are dead in trespass and sin.

Christ rose from the dead 2000 years ago. How can that be relevant to our lives today? That's what Christ's Word and Sacraments are for. Christ's Word and Sacraments communicate to us what Christ accomplished for us 2000 years ago and half a globe away.² The Apostle St. Paul writes in the chapter previous to today's epistle:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.³

Luther writes:

Note well this passage [**I Timothy 2:6**] and others like it. They distinguish between redemption as an actual act and redemption as it is preached. Had Christ been crucified a hundred thousand times and had nothing been said about it, what profit would the act of His being brought to the cross have brought? But when I come to this, I must draw this act into history and publish it for all the world. Also, if anyone had seen this, he would not have thought that the work of redemption was taking place there. The work is fulfilled on the cross, but no one knows of the redemption except the Father and the Son. Therefore to the act also the use of the act must be added, that it may be declared through the Word and that one may hold it by faith and, thus believing, may be saved. Paul's intent,

²“How can what Christ did for us two thousand years ago – through His life, death, and resurrection – become effective in our lives today? During the Reformation, as also today, some imagined they would experience the Holy Spirit through their own reflections, by enjoying nature, or by ecstatic religious experiences. The comforting truth is that the Holy Spirit works through objective, external, sure, and certain means of grace [God's Word and Sacraments], through which we receive justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.” *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Readers Edition of the Book of Concord*, gen. Paul Timothy McCain, assoc. ed. Edward Andrew Engelbrecht, assistant eds. Robert Cleveland Baker, Gene Edward Veith, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, second edition, 2006, p. 33, amplification in brackets added.

³**Colossians 2:12.**

then, is this: to the work of redemption belongs the Word of preaching, which does nothing else but impress the work of redemption.⁴

Very blessed are we to have God's Word and Sacraments because they deliver to us Christ's Work that liberates us from the fruits of our sins in thought, word, and deed. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved:)...⁵

Of course, a corpse cannot do anything to save itself. If it has any chance at all, it must come from the outside. *That which comes from outside the man and quickens, i.e. makes alive, is, as the Apostle St. Paul writes, God's "grace", i.e. God's Word and Sacraments because they are God's grace.*

Sin brings about the death of men because it transgresses God's law. The Apostle St. John writes:

Whoever committh sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.⁶

Because of Adam's sin, there is not one person who is not a sinner. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.⁷

⁴*Luther's Works*, Vol. 28, p. 268, amplification in brackets added. "For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves." *The Large Catechism, Part Second, Of The Creed, Article III.38-39, Triglotta*, 689.

⁵**Ephesians 2:5.**

⁶**I John 3:4.**

Again, the Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned....⁸

Because of Adam's sin, all men are born dead in trespass and sin.

B. Men are raised to newness of life by the Absolution of all sin in Holy Baptism.

Because men's sins send them to the grave, Christ took upon Himself the sins of men and went to the grave for them. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Who [Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.⁹

In other words, because our sins sent Christ to the grave, Christ's Resurrection from the grave means our sins are gone, Absolved. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Now, then, if the Father raised Christ from the dead, He, by this glorious resurrection act, declared that the sins of the whole world are fully expiated, or atoned for, and that all mankind is now regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal. This gracious reconciliation and justification is clearly taught in Rom. 4:25: "Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." ... This truth Dr. Walther stressed anew in America. He taught that the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the *actual absolution pronounced upon all sinners*. ... Calov, following Gerhard, rightly points out the relation of Christ's resurrection to our justification as follows: "Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin. ... As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him."¹⁰

⁷**Romans 3:10-11.**

⁸**Romans 5:12.**

⁹**Romans 4:25.**

¹⁰*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 321.

Because Holy Baptism Absolves of all sin for Christ's sake, it saves. The Apostle St. Peter writes:

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ....¹¹

Notice how the Apostle St. Peter connects Christ's Resurrection from the dead with a clear conscience toward God. The Apostle St. Peter does so because Christ's Resurrection from the dead is the Absolution of the entire world of sin, giving men a clear conscience toward God. Because Holy Baptism gives the Absolution of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, it removes any barrier between God and men. With the removal of this barrier, men are no longer driven from God because of fear induced by their sin but rather reconnect with God and gain life with God forever. Holy Baptism, i.e. the Gospel¹², raises men to newness of life. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.¹³

II. The Gospel Raises Men to Life Eternal and the Resurrection of the Body; and the Gospel is the "Things Above" Christians Cultivate.

A. The Gospel raises men to life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

¹¹**I Peter 3:21.**

¹²God's Word and Sacraments are the Gospel. "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.

¹³**Romans 6:4.**

When and where does Holy Baptism occur? Holy Baptism occurs here and now on earth. For this reason, rising to newness of life in Christ begins in the here and now on earth with Holy Baptism, i.e. the Gospel. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.¹⁴

Again, the Apostle St. Paul writes:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.¹⁵

Again the Apostle St. Paul writes of the newness of life eternal beginning right now through the Gospel:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.¹⁶

The Lutheran Church confesses that life eternal begins in the here and now on earth by the Gospel through faith:

And while we are cheered in the midst of the terrors and receive consolation, other spiritual movements at the same time grow, the knowledge of God, fear of God, hope, love of God; and we are *regenerated*, as Paul says, Col. 3, 10, and 2 Cor. 3, 18, *in the knowledge of God, and beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, i.e.*, we receive the true knowledge of God, so that we truly fear Him, truly trust that we are cared for, and that we are heard by Him. This regeneration is, as it were, the beginning of eternal life¹⁷

¹⁴**Colossians 3:1.**

¹⁵**Colossians 2:12.**

¹⁶**Romans 6:3-4.**

¹⁷***The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article III: Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law.* 230, 231, *Triglotta*, p. 217, underscore added.**

Because we are raised to newness of life by the Gospel through faith, then we also gain in that same Gospel the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection.¹⁸

St. Augustine writes of this two-fold resurrection, of the resurrection to newness of life now by the Gospel through faith, and the resurrection of the body on the Last Day by the Power of the Gospel:

As, then, there are two regenerations, of which I have already made mention, – the one according to faith, and which takes place in the present life by means of baptism; the other according to the flesh, and which shall be accomplished in its incorruption and immortality by means of the great and final judgment, – so are there also two resurrections, – the one the first and spiritual resurrection, which has place in this life, and preserves us from coming into the second death; the other the second, which does not occur now, but in the end of the world, and which is of the body, not of the soul, and which by the last judgment shall dismiss some into the second death, others into that life which has no death.¹⁹

Because the Gospel gives to us Christ's Resurrection, it raises men to life eternal now and the resurrection of the body when Christ returns again in glory.

B. Christians cultivate things above to sustain faith through this life, i.e. they look to Christ's Word and Sacraments.

And so, naturally, the Apostle St. Paul bids us seek the things above. What are they? They are the things that got us into the above, God's Word and Sacraments. Christians, therefore, seek and cultivate all their lives Christ's Word and Sacraments because they are the things above that provide escape from this world and the grave to life eternal in Christ's Glorious

¹⁸**Romans 6:5.**

¹⁹shall dismiss some into the second death, others into that life which has no death. St. Augustine, *The City of God, Book XX, Chapter 7, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Volume II, St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted, May 1988, p. 426.

Kingdom.²⁰ St. John Chrysostom writes of God's Word and Sacraments being the glorious "things above" that Christians cultivate all their lives:

Why, he that is grown old, and hath travelled over much country, reports to us with all exactness the number of stadia, and the situations of cities, their plans, and their harbors and markets; but we ourselves know not even how far we are from the city that is in heaven. For surely we should have endeavored to shorten the space, had we known the distance. That city being not only as far from us as Heaven is from the earth, but even much farther, if we be negligent; like, as on the other hand, if we do our best, ... even in one instant we shall come to the gates thereof. For not by local space, but by moral disposition [i.e. by faith through the Gospel because faith justifies {**Romans 3:28**}], are these distances defined.

... But though never before, now, at any rate, let us do this. Yea, for we ... are on the point of entering into a city ... of gold, and more precious than any gold.

Let us then mark her foundations, her gates consisting of sapphires and pearls; for indeed we have in Matthew [the Gospel of] an excellent guide. For through his gate we shall now enter in, and much diligence is required on our part....

Yes, for the city is most kingly and glorious; not as the cities with us, divided into a market-place, and the royal courts; for there all is the court of the King. Let us open therefore the gates of our mind, let us open our ears, and with great trembling, when on the point of setting foot on the threshold, let us worship the King that is therein. ...

For if in a theatre, when a great silence hath been made, then the letters of the king are read, much more in this city must all be composed, and stand with soul and ear erect. For it is not the letters of any earthly master, but of the Lord of angels, which are on the point of being read.

If we would order ourselves on this wise, the grace itself of the Spirit will lead us in great perfection, and we shall arrive at the very royal throne, and attain to all the good things, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus

²⁰“Here, too, our theologians, following the lead of some Church Fathers, give the discussion a practical turn by saying that we should concern ourselves not so much with determining the place of hell as rather with escaping it. Quenstedt: ‘Chrysostom states correctly: “We search not where it is, but how we may flee it.”’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 547.

Christ, to whom be glory and might, together with the father and the Holy Ghost, now and always, even forever and ever.²¹

Conclusion

Here and now, the Apostle St. Paul writes, Christians are raised with Christ to life eternal through His Word and Sacraments. One cannot get more relevant for life than that.

Because we are raised to life eternal now by the Gospel through faith, then we also look forward to the resurrection of the body and life eternal in glory when Our Risen Lord and Savior returns again at the end of the age.

Amen.

²¹A *Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted, May 1986, pp. 7, 8, amplification in brackets and underscore added.

“**Chrysostom, John.** Patriarch of Constantinople; b. 345 or 347; d. 407. His name 'Golden-mouthed' [Chrysostom is derived from the Greek words *chrysos* {gold} and *stoma* {mouth}; hence, 'Golden-mouthed'] was not applied to him till after his death. Member of a rich patrician family, he studied rhetoric and philosophy, intended to follow law, but turned to the Scriptures instead, leading the life of a strict ascetic in the first years after his baptism; labored as priest in Antioch for twelve years; became patriarch of Constantinople in 398. He immediately inaugurated certain needed reforms and laid the foundation for systematic charitable work. But his position became increasingly insecure on account of the enemies which he made by his rigorous rules and by his fearless attacks on the luxury of his day. Theophilus of Alexandria finally succeeded in having a synod called under the auspices of Empress Eudocia, the Synod ad Quercum, in 403, by which Chrysostom was deposed and banished. After his recall a second synod, held in Constantinople, once more condemned him, whereupon he, yielding only to force, was banished to Asia Minor. The hardships of the last journeys were too great for him, and he died before reaching his final destination, at Comana, Asia Minor." *Concordia Cyclopedia*, p. 143, s.v. “**Chrysostom, John**”, amplification in brackets added.