

## FROM CHRIST'S DEATH COMES LIFE ETERNAL

Our sermon for this second Sunday of Easter, this day we remember God's grace in calling Donald L. Jensen and Hunter G. Jensen His sons in holy baptism, is taken from our readings, with God's comfort for us found in the following translated verse:

*For I handed over to all of you in the first place, the thing (which) also all of you received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He has been raised** in the third day according to the Scriptures...<sup>1</sup>*

Sharon, David and Sara, Johanna and Adam, family and friends of Don Jensen:

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

In the midst of the three Holy Days which the Church for centuries has called the Triduum – Good-Friday through Resurrection Sunday – God called Deacon Don Jensen from his service on earth into the heavenly courts. There God serves him His gifts at His Table forever. For us who know and love Deacon Don, those were three days of shock, of grief, of rejoicing, of bewilderment, of sorrow, of remembrance, and, for those who, by God's grace hold onto the sure confession of Christ: days of sure and certain hope in the proclamation: Christ is risen!

The three days of the first Triduum in the first century A.D. were ones of confusion, bewilderment and grief for the first disciples of our Lord Jesus. By the end of the third day, had reports come out that the angels had declared of Jesus: "He does not remain here; He has been raised, just as He said!" News had been put out by word of mouth that Jesus had been seen as raised from the dead: in particular by Mary, and by the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Even so, those first followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were still uncertain about all that they were seeing and hearing, and what it all meant at the end of the Triduum.

Yet, for Jesus, those three days were days of fulfillment of the Word of God. Over parts of three days, all things that were necessary for the forgiveness of the whole world's sins; all the divine requirements needed to give you forgiveness, salvation, and the declaration that you are

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<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 15:3-4.

right with our heavenly Father; all the divinely prescribed steps, actions, words, and submission were completed by Jesus. That means that everything needful for the faithful who fall asleep in the Lord to be assured that they are truly right with God had been accomplished by Jesus. The Word of God was fulfilled in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was, is, and ever shall be: Son of God and Son of Man.

For the grieving faithful of long ago, those were realities with which to wrestle; those were proclamations to be absorbed. Prophecies which had been fulfilled before them were yet to be fully believed. Later, through the breathing in of the breath of divine life, inspiration, they faithfully recorded without error what they saw, heard, and experienced. And, by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit preserved their words for transmission to us today, to bring us that which Deacon Don often closed his notes: Shalom, that is, peace with God and with our fellow Christians.

For the grieving faithful in this place this day, there are realities which are realized in the sure and certain knowledge that the eyewitness reports we have received are true. That means that today, we in this place are free to declare that Donald Leslie Jensen has been fully sainted, made holy, and can no longer sin. Saint Don has, through no work on his own, on account of the full and complete work of Christ, fallen asleep in the Lord. Deacon Don's mortal remains will be raised on the Last Day, at the Last Trumpet, and he, with all who have put off their mortal bodies in the Faith will be raised by the Word of God to new, glorified, pure, perfect, and immortal bodies. By the gift of the Faith which God gave him, Don confessed that God meant that to be His plan for him as he lived and breathed. After all, one of his favorite verses declares:

*“For I have known the plans which I have for you all,” says YHWH, “Plans for shalom and not for evil, to give to all of you (a) future and (a) hope.”<sup>2</sup>*

In their original setting, those were words of hope from one of God's called and commissioned prophets to the people of God. It was first proclaimed to those who were in earthly captivity on account of their sins. The context of that memory verse which Don treasured shows that that Word of God was originally for those who were a faithful remnant suffering in time alongside others who had rejected God's Word.

By extension, since that Word was applied to the faithful in the

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 29:11.

earthly household of God, like Don, you may hold them to be true for the whole household of the Faith. They are words for all times, to bring shalom and hope in the midst of all kinds of suffering on account of sin. The plans that God has for all of you who call upon Him in the Faith are declared in the theme verse chosen for this memorial service:

*For I handed over to all of you in the first place, the thing (which) also all of you received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He has been raised** in the third day according to the Scriptures...<sup>3</sup>*

That is to say, God, through the faithful transmission of the inerrant Faith of Christ, through the means God Himself has chosen and sustains – His Word and His Sacraments – God declares His will fulfilled for you believers in the on-going confession of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all your sins. This Faith is declared in the Apostolic creedal statement of St. Paul. This is a text that surely serves as one of the foundations of the Creed we will confess shortly in question—and—answer form.

The will of God for sinners is this: **Christ died for our sins... He was buried...He has been raised.** The first two phrases are statements of completed fact – even verified by extra-biblical reports. The third phrase declares an on-going reality: Christ Jesus has been raised by God the Father and remains living. That truth of the resurrected Lord Jesus has been testified to by so many who were eye-witnesses to the facts stated by St. Paul. Some of those who so testified were publicly executed for holding onto their good confession of Christ-crucified and resurrected. That teaches us that the message of the apostolic Faith is one to live and die for; one in which you may wake in and fall asleep to in the Lord.

On that table, next to the baptismal font, are emblems of the good confession of the Faith which God gave and sustained in Deacon Don Jensen. The font itself, even if it is not used by God in a particular Lord's Service as He will use it a bit later today, reminds those who will hear and believe the Word of God that His Word is true:

*(An) antitype now saves us, Baptism, (not of (a) putting away (of the) filth (of the) flesh), but (of an) answer*

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

*(of a) good conscience toward God, through (the) resurrection of Jesus Christ...<sup>4</sup>*

That Don has a good conscience toward God, given to him by God through Water and the Word is symbolized today by the other public testimonies on that table. There hangs the symbol of the Church's office, the Diaconate. It was received by Don as hands were laid upon him and we commissioned him into the Church's service. In that rite, Don confessed the good confession of the Faith of Jesus Christ. Above the stole stands the sun-catcher which represents the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, Whom both Jesus and John saw at Jesus' baptism, and Who was given into this fallen creation by Jesus at His ascension to the ultimate position of power and authority. That Spirit has been breathed forth into this world to be the Comforter. He comes to people, when and where He wills, in the preaching of the Word and administration of God's mysteries to bring them Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all their sins. Next is a plaque which contains a good confession of the Faith, that which is worked in Don, and us by God's good gifts.

Then, there stands a single rose bud. That symbolizes the day, almost nine years ago, when Don and Sharon sat near the place of that font and spoke their vows in the good confession of the Faith. It is past that font that Don traveled, week after week, for decades, as God called him to God's Table. It is that font in which our Deacon dipped his fingers and made the sign of Christ, the sign of the Cross, which Don had long ago received in Holy Baptism. Some time ago, Don began, of his own redeemed free will to mark himself each time he came forward to receive Jesus sacramentally, in, with, and under the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper. Here, God moved Don to receive His gifts of forgiveness and strengthening to life everlasting. It is that font today which will be the instrument of the Means of God's grace for Hunter, Don's grandson, as God again brings life out of death, even as the Word of God declares:

*We have died together with [Jesus] through the Baptism into the death, that just as Christ was raised, from (the) dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we in new life may continue to conduct our lives.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 3:21.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 6:4.

It is God's gift of baptismal life out of death that the Church celebrates this day. We believe, teach, and confess that from Christ's death comes eternal life. God gives that life, when and where He wills, through the means He chooses. The Faith of Christ Jesus is a gift. By the very definition of the word "gift," the Faith cannot be earned, or chosen, it is simply, passively, received. The Faith of Jesus is perfect Faith, Trust, and Hope in the full Word of God, unto death. That means it is the Perfect Faith even the death Jesus died while bearing the sins of the whole world for all time. His Faith is a gift that, through the years of the baptized person who remains in the Word of God, God works and sustains in us who are being saved.

That is why we are free in Christ to rejoice in God's baptism of Hunter Garrett at a Memorial Service in memory of the Faith God gave to Donald Leslie Jensen. Simple, plain water, from the tap, from a river, lake, or ocean, when it is combined with the Word of God and the name of the candidate, God causes death – to Adam's sin and all our sins; and brings life – eternal life in the risen Christ, both now and into eternity. In a real way, the Sacrament which is soon going to be celebrated is Grandpa Jensen's sharing the Faith of Christ with Hunter. It is the Heavenly Father's baptism first given to the father of David whom we remember today, and through God's faithfulness, to David. Now Hunter, through the guiding of his father David, will receive God's touch through the Water and Word, and God will bring life out of the death of Christ for him.

Here, God the Father gives Christ Jesus. Here Christ Jesus gives the Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit leads many to receive the Word of God. Here that Word and Spirit direct their hearers to Christ-crucified and resurrected. Here Jesus the Christ presents you to the Father as one for whom He has died. And in that reality, we declare today: Christ is risen!

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Memorial Service Sermon in memory of the Faith God gave to Donald L. Jensen

Resurrection II

I Corinthians 15; Psalm 139; II Timothy 4:78; John 20:19-31

April 7, 2013

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

ὁ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σώζει βάπτισμα, οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις  
τύπου ἀλλὰ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν, δι' ἀναστάσεως  
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, <sup>6</sup>

*Us (an) antitype now saves, Baptism, not of flesh putting  
away filth, but (a) conscience good answer for God, through  
resurrection of Jesus Christ...*

συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον, ἵνα  
ὡσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτως καὶ  
ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.<sup>7</sup>

We have died together with Him through the Baptism into the  
death, that just as He was raised, Christ, from dead through the glory of  
the Father, thus also we in new life we may continue to walk about.

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<sup>6</sup> Aland, B., Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. (1993).  
*The Greek New Testament* (4th ed.) (605). Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible  
Societies.

<sup>7</sup> Aland, B., Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. (1993).  
*The Greek New Testament* (4th ed.) (418). Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible  
Societies.