

THE LORD SEES HIS PEOPLE EVEN WHEN THEY CANNOT BEHOLD HIM

Our sermon for this second Sunday of the Resurrection Season is taken from our Psalm. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

*Our soul waits for YHWH;
our Help and our Shield (is) He.¹*

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

This Sunday of the Church Year, every year, is the one for which novelist Victor Hugo named the Hunchback of Notre Dame. That was because the writer indicated that the hunchback was abandoned at the cathedral on this day. Today's name comes from the opening word from the Introit of the day, in Latin, Quasimodogeniti. It may loosely be translated, "like new-born (babies)." (Those words are also found in the Verse for the Day. When our choir is deemed ready, the Sunday verses may be chanted just before the public reading of the Sunday Gospel).

In addition, today marks the annual remembrance of the locked-room appearances of Jesus on Resurrection Sunday and the first Sunday thereafter. It is also the day we remember Thomas' doubts and his eventual confession of the Christ as risen from the dead. That means that this is one day in the year in which we emphasize the biblical fact that believing is seeing. In a way, the disciples cowering behind locked doors were like newborn babies. That is, in their understanding and use of the Faith in regard to seeing Jesus as the crucified and risen Son of God Whose blood had covered over their sins; Whose death had bound the devil and destroyed death; and Whose resurrection declared them right with our heavenly Father.

All of that begins for us each year on this Sunday with the words of the first Proper of the Day (the readings which change from Sunday to Sunday, or day-to-day in the Church calendar). That Proper is the 33rd Psalm. We do not have time today to hear every verse of that Psalm fully proclaimed. Yet we will take some time hear

¹ *Psalm 33:20.*

from the verses which most closely parallel the Gospel's themes contained in the resurrection appearances of Jesus and the disciples' confession. A central one of those is this one:

*Behold (the) Eye of YHWH is upon the ones fearing Him,
to those hoping for His he'sed (lovingkindness, steadfast love, mercy)...²*

Those words were shown to be fulfilled when Jesus called Thomas out on his claim regarding his thoughts about what it would take for him to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Jesus' challenge to Thomas shows that, while the disciples did not see Jesus when Thomas made his claim, Jesus beheld them. Jesus' response to the one who doubted declares that He was, even then, before His ascension, watching over those who feared Him.

Jesus knew the exact words to tell Thomas to turn him from unbelief to faith even though he did not believe the others when they told him of Whom they had seen. Jesus was attentive to words of Him spoken by the Ten who were, for a week, hoping in His grace, mercy, and lovingkindness. That is to say that Jesus, Who was unseen by those who were first of the Faith to hear His Word of "Shalom," "peace," was believed in by them on account of the Word He proclaimed and the Spirit He gave. Jesus revealed that He knew of their conversations. In that, we can understand that He was keeping watch over those who were still fearful in the first seven days after His being raised from the dead.

From that we can discern that Jesus watches over all His disciples who declare His death and resurrection. That dear ones of the Faith, is an argument from the lesser to the greater which may be rightly drawn from this text. That is to declare that the first disciples who heard and believed the Lord's Word of peace represent the fullness of all who will hear and believe that Word. His gift of the Spirit was enough to

² Psalm 33:18.

strengthen them to tell Thomas about Jesus' Presence, even in the face of Thomas' doubts. His Word is enough to strengthen you in your confession of the Faith.

That means that Jesus is watching over us who believe. Though not seen by our eyes, we can know through this day's record that Jesus is with us when we let others know of Jesus' death and resurrection. From the record of the witness to Thomas, we can believe that Jesus is looking upon us in mercy and love, even when others continue to reject our testimonies which are drawn from the Word of God. It is the Word, after all, which Jesus uses to convince Thomas. There is no record that man ever touched the Lord before he made his confession of the Faith. It is the Word of God, with the Spirit of God working through it, which moves the hearer to confess Jesus as the Lord and Savior. Such the Apostle/Evangelist makes clear when he proclaims, in the Verse which we sing in the Lord's services here every Wednesday and most fifth Sundays of the month when they occur,

*These things are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...*³

Those words are chanted after the Psalm of the Day, the Old Testament and Epistle Readings have been proclaimed in the Lord's Service. St. John's confession is given to be our public confession. Such reminds us that the day's texts were assembled by the faithful of long ago to be proclaimed as fulfilled in the proclamation of the Gospel reading. That is one reason why we have heard, in four year rotations, each of the four prime Sunday texts as sources for the Sunday sermons.

That having been said, we turn our ears, hearts, and minds back to the first of the texts for the day. The 33rd Psalm has been, and is being, proclaimed to be heard as fulfilled in Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord of all. While that is declared throughout the Psalm, it becomes very clear in these words:

³ Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. *Lutheran Service Book*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006, 205.

*YHWH causes to bring to naught (the) counsel of nations;
He causes to frustrate (the) plans of peoples.⁴*

It was the counsel of the nations, the Gentiles, represented in full in the Roman Empire of the first century, that the King of the Jews should be scourged and crucified unto death as a terrorist. They, with the unbelieving Jews, whose faithlessness caused them to be numbered with the Gentiles in putting the Son of God to death, they had thought to end any uprising King Jesus might inspire. Little did they know that their capital charges against Jesus would bring terror to those that had corrupted man from the Fall of Adam onward. That is the wisdom of God, as our Psalm declares:

*(The) counsel of YHWH (is) unto eternity;
(they) stand, the thoughts of His Heart, from generation to generation.⁵*

Do you see the Creator God's counsel in the death and resurrection of the Son? (God as Creator is proclaimed in verses six through nine in the Psalm). God, in Himself, before He, by His Word, laid the foundations of the cosmos, determined that the Son of God as True Man would have to be convicted and tried as a terrorist. Before the first man, Adam, sinned, God had planned his rescue from that sin and all its effects.

Jesus is, after all, the Terrorist who attacked and bound the devil. Jesus has flown into the gates of Hell. In His rising from death, He blew them off their hinges. This He did to free us, to forever free you from the Pit. Jesus' Word, His call to repentance, works terror in us on account of our sins. If we desire to remain in them, the fear of His Day of Judgment strikes to the core of our beings. This terror on account of sin Jesus works in the faithful, in you. He does this to prepare you, to ready us, for His Word of grace which works peace with God in us on account of Jesus' sacrifice.

⁴ Psalm 33:10.

⁵ Psalm 33:11.

The Psalm of the day declares of repentant sinners who have been forgiven and live under God's grace:

*Blessed (is) the nation which (has) YHWH (as) its Elohe;
the people (whom) He has chosen (to be a) heritage for Him.⁶*

You who fear, love and trust in God above all things are the nation of which the Psalm speaks. You are blessed because He is the God Who loves you enough to scare you out of your sins, and has grace enough for you to comfort you in His forgiveness. He is the Creator God Who chooses for Himself a people to declare holy, as He, unseen bodily by us, watches over the proclamation of His Word that daily turns sinners to saints.

Jesus is the God Who died that we, that you, might be His heritage. He gave His life that you might inherit the kingdom of the heavens – now. To seal that truth in you whom He has called by the Good News of His death in your sins, He comes to you, through these closed doors, and you behold Him by faith. Here, in a way more fully than He was for Thomas on that eighth day of God's New Creation, Jesus is beheld touching His people, giving them, you, forgiveness, life and salvation. He Whom Thomas dared not touch that day, yet confessed by the Faith, touches you with His crucified, risen and ascended Body and Blood. Our Psalm is fulfilled in Jesus, as it proclaims:

*From the heavens He causes to look down, YHWH;
He sees all the sons of Adam.⁷*

In the Spirit, breathed out fully upon you by God with the water and Word of Holy Baptism, you understand that God lets you behold Him looking down upon you through the proclamation of His Word. The same Jesus who proclaimed, "Peace by with you," declares that peace to you. For you who believe that the terror of sin,

⁶ Psalm 33:12.

⁷ Psalm 33:13.

death, and hell itself has been taken from you as it was borne by Jesus, the truth that God watches over you brings comfort. You who trust in that which God did and does for you through His Son, look to God's Judgment and give thanks. (And, in that you show to yourselves that, in Christ, you are the righteous ones who, in verses 1-3, are called to sing this day's New Song of Salvation). The Psalm proclaims of you:

*He may cause to deliver from death their soul;
and keep them alive in famine.⁸*

In His crucifixion and death, Jesus fulfilled those words for you. His death delivered you from eternal death. His resurrection lifted you up to live in Him through the Word of God even while you cannot see Him. While the faithful of God have had a famine from His human resurrected and glorified Body, He has nonetheless been with them, with us, through His Word and Sacraments. Oh, Jesus means for you to find Him in this day's Psalm. As you "see" Him in the Word, you believe He will come for you and raise your body, in a new, eternal, glorified state. Until that time, you may freely sing, chant or say with the faithful of all the ages:

*Our soul waits for YHWH;
our Help and our Shield is He.⁹*

Christ Jesus is here. He is in our midst. He comes to touch you with His blood-bought forgiveness. His Word is over you and shields you from all your enemies, watching over you as good mothers do for their newborn babies. That you believe that gives you the trust to declare: Christ is risen!

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

Resurrection II (LSB One-Year Series) April 27, 2014

Psalm 33; Ezekiel 37:1-14; I John 5:4-10; John 20:19-31

Pastor Michael S. Mercheux

Soli Deo Gloria

⁸ Psalm 33:19.

⁹ Psalm 33:20.