

A Word from Pastor Preus

God loves life. He is the author of life and our Creator. And that is why He hates sin. The wages of sin is death because by our sin we seek to find the source of life in ourselves rather than in the God who made us. Think of it. That's exactly what sin is. When we covet what we think will improve our lives, we deny God as the one who makes life good. When we lust for flesh that grows old and fades like grass, we deny the God who took on our flesh to redeem it and sanctify us. When we value our life above another's – whether by speaking ill of someone or harboring hatred in our hearts toward our weaker brothers – we deny love to those who have been made in the image of the living God. This is sin. The soul who sins shall die (Ezek. 18:20).

That's why Jesus died. One man died. The Father took everything that the law can possibly condemn in you and He imputed it to His Son. Yes, Jesus was unlawfully lynched by murderers. But He was tried, convicted, and justly executed by His Almighty and righteous Father, who for our sake laid on His Son the iniquity of us all. Sin needed to be punished. And so it pleased the Lord, for our sake, to bruise Him, as Isaiah tells us. The Lord is the one who put Him to grief, as Isaiah foretold. But He saw the travail of His soul, as Isaiah said He would, and He was satisfied. ***“By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”*** And bore them He did (Is. 53:10-11). And here it is that we see how strong His love to save us is. ***“Christ was delivered up because of our offenses,”*** St. Paul tells us. ***“[But He] was raised [again] because of our justification”*** (Rom. 4:25).

Jesus was raised by the glory of the Father. Jesus rose. This is true. But Jesus being alive wouldn't mean anything for us if the Father hadn't raised Him. Because when the Father raised the Son He declared Him who bore our sin not guilty. He declared Him who became sin for us to be free from anything deserving of death. But what does this mean? If all our sin and the sin of the whole world was placed on Jesus who was tortured, crucified, and forsaken by His God, then what does it mean that this same Jesus was declared righteous and innocent by His Father? It means that the sin and guilt He bore is no more. It is gone. It is paid for. God accepted His holy sacrifice as the true Passover Lamb. And so in the Resurrection of Christ, God declares the whole world innocent of everything that the Lamb of God took away. This is true even before you believe it. It must be. Your sins are forgiven. You stand righteous before God your Maker. This is the proclamation that works faith in your heart and saves you from yourself.

The will and power of the Father and the Son are one. What do they want? Well, what does God do? This is what we learn on Easter Sunday: that in these glorious events God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. When Jesus died, the Father killed. When Jesus rose, the Father raised. When Jesus was vindicated, the Father justified you. When Jesus was quickened, eternal life was made yours. And so we shall see the saying fulfilled, ***“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

In His death, Jesus said, ***“It is finished.”*** In His Resurrection, the Father echoed His Son’s triumphant declaration. *“Christ rose! I raised Him! He is Risen indeed.”* Alleluia! This proclamation speaks for itself. There is so much significance to the fact that Jesus who was dead is now alive that it is hard to say anything more significant than the plain and simple fact. But say it we must. We shout it from the roof-tops. We gather together every Easter – every first day of the week to declare what we believe. Here is salvation: where Christ crucified and raised for sinners is proclaimed to you. It is as St. Paul tells us: ***“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”*** (Rom. 10:9). Thank God that He teaches us what to confess – what to believe – what saves our souls and gives us eternal life in heaven.

– ***Pastor John Christian Preus***