

Rev. Danny Mackey
Fifth Sunday of Easter – Cantate
May 15, 2022
John 16:5–15
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!

[Jesus said:] “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

Jesus is no longer visible to us. We can’t see Him with our eyes. Christians behold Him by faith, though. Christians see Him in the waters of Baptism and under the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. Christians hear His voice in the Scriptures and in the voice of their preacher. Christians see Christ working through all people—fathers, mothers, doctors, nurses, teachers, governors, police officers, the store clerk, and barista, even unbelievers—when they are provided for in their bodies. This doesn’t make sense to those of a secular, humanist, and Western mindset—but then again, Christians are in the world and not of it. Christians have the mind of Christ.

Having the mind of Christ is a challenge. It’s easy enough in Church, surrounded by the holy things, among a holy people. But too often holy people aren’t all that holy outside of Church. You behave in Church. I’ve very rarely heard any of you cuss or curse. But I suspect some of you have potty mouths. And that’s just thinking about the way you talk. I don’t even want to think of the other things you do. Nor do you want to think about the way I talk or the things I do outside of Church. Here, we can be saints. Here, we can be our better selves, as God commands and as we really want to be.

But the world is seductive. It doesn’t want us to be saints. It calls us hypocrites and bigots. Those in this world think that we’re their peers and that they can pressure us. And we too often give into it. While not in Church, we say we agree with all manner of sin and evil. Some of us have even gone on parade, promoting deviant lifestyles. Some promote selfish and narcissistic attitudes on Facebook and Instagram. Some start fights and arguments with the world as if those are battles worth fighting. They get mean and nasty, down and dirty. And some openly abandon God’s clear Word and give into the sinful and destructive ideas of our children. Because we’re more afraid of our children than we are of God. All the while, we come to the Church, and we sit and stay silent about what our hearts believe. God knows our hearts. He will not be mocked. His patience with us will only last so

long. We must repent. We must repent and believe as we've been taught by God's clear Word and the Small Catechism.

Do we really want to be like the world? Do we really want to be like those people standing outside of Supreme Court justices' houses and screaming about how we ought to be able to murder our unborn children? Do we want to be like those who invade countries and try to subjugate our fellow human creatures? Do we really want to be like those people whose self-worth is based on likes and retweets? Do we really want to be like the world? Or do we want to be better? Do we want to be like those in heaven?

Jesus has ascended into heaven. He is over this world. Above it. So are His saints. As Christians, we only find our peers within the Church. Our fellow Christians are important and so very necessary. They hold us accountable. They correct our false living and moral failings. They rebuke our false ideas about God and about humanity. They help train us to be righteous and to seek righteousness. They teach us what is true and what is false. And they comfort us in our struggles and during our dark times. The mindset of the saints is the very mind of Christ and of heaven. That's because our fellow saints have the same Spirit that Jesus has given us. The spirit of the world is the devil. But we... we have the Holy Spirit.

AND JESUS ASCENDED SO THAT WE CAN HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.

[Jesus declared:] "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you."

We have the Holy Spirit. Each of us, in the waters of Holy Baptism, received the Holy Spirit. We have the same Spirit, the same faith, the same Baptism, the same God and Father of us all. He's given us all the same things. Things given only because of Jesus' ascension into heaven. By ascending, Jesus has raised our human nature—Jesus has exalted us to stand before the Father's throne. And, by the Holy Spirit, we are able to stand. To stand bold and firm in the faith. To stand before God without fear of judgment. To stand as the saints He has declared us to be. The world stands at Christ's left hand, convicted and condemned by the Holy Spirit. At Jesus' right hand, Christians stand apart from the world and as a holy people. And not just holy, but also royal and with all the grandeur of heaven itself.

This is because the Holy Spirit gives us the very things of Christ. Where the world judges and condemns us, we still call out to them. We speak God's warning, so that maybe...

just maybe, some of them might be saved. We don't rejoice at the world being condemned. We don't rejoice at the suffering of others, especially their eternal suffering. Like our heavenly Father, we desire that all be saved and come to the knowledge of salvation. And we have that salvation to share with them. This Gospel has been entrusted to the Church, in the holy things, in the midst of a holy people.

It is our joy and privilege to share the Gospel. To share that Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead so that we can have everlasting life. And by our sins, we mean the sins of everybody. Every person who fails to control his or her tongue. Every parent who abandons God's clear Word for the naïve and foolish opinions of his or her child. Every person who seeks his or her worth from social media or embraces destructive lifestyles. Even each and every person screaming and crying out for the so-called right to murder his or her unborn son or daughter. Even tyrants who seek to conquer other nations. Jesus died for all their sins. And His death was sufficient for them all. No sin is too great for Christ's sacrifice. No sin hasn't been forgiven in Jesus' crucifixion.

When the world looks at Christ's crucifixion, they see a terrible and horrific thing. Years ago, one review of the *Passion of the Christ* called it a snuff film. The reviewer could only see it with the mindset of a secular humanist. But Christians see Jesus' crucifixion entirely differently. It's the most beautiful of all things. It's the greatest sign of the greatest love this world has ever known. That's why we beautify it with gold and silver. That's why the Church adorns herself with it. On steeples and on the front of our buildings and prominently displayed in our Sanctuaries. Why Christians wear crosses as jewelry. The cross and Christ's crucifixion is a thing of beauty. Because it is how the Father has loved the world, what the Son was willing to endure for us and for humanity, and what the Holy Spirit proclaims to the world.

Jesus' crucifixion is the Father's answer to sin and judgment and righteousness. It is what the Holy Spirit joins us to in Baptism. We feast upon the fruit of that sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. We receive the forgiveness won on the cross from the pastor and from our fellow saints. It alone is what the Holy Spirit speaks to us—for all true faith and religion is inextricably connected to the cross—and it shapes us as a holy people.

From heaven above, Jesus has placed His cross both upon our hearts and on our minds—on our whole being. We are exalted. Our minds are transformed and renewed by

the mind of Christ Himself. And, because our minds are of heaven, we live as that holy people. Then, perhaps, when the world goes against us, some might see our good deeds and give glory to the Father. And what is the Father's glory? It's that some might come to the faith, receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins, and then see what Christians see: Jesus' love for them and for all the world.

In His name.

Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!