

## SERMON – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 19/20

*Text: 3<sup>rd</sup> article of Apostles' Creed & Jn. 20:20-23*

- I. The Holy Christian church & communion of saints
  - Define church & saint
  - “If Jesus didn’t come to establish the Holy Christian Church on earth, then the book of Acts doesn’t make any sense”
  - In this text Jesus addresses the very first church... the seed of the harvest of billions that was to come
  - He tells them – “Peace” – “I am sending you” – *He breathes on them* “Receive the Holy Spirit” – “forgive & retain sins”
  - You see... the great good news of Jesus Christ is not so much about receiving the “goodies” of life in heaven... it’s more about sin & forgiveness
  - Because... as Martin Luther said... where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation... or you could say, where there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no life and salvation.
  
- II. The Holy Christian Church is formed by the breath of Jesus Christ (Holy Spirit which we receive through Word and Sacrament normally administered by Christ’s church)
  - The foundational conviction of the church is that all human beings are sinners and we say think and do bad things that hurt others and ourselves
  - The world is sinful and full of rottenness as well as goodness... things like disease and disaster & the cruel reality of dog-eat-dog
  - Now here’s the thing that makes the Christian church unique... it treats sin with forgiveness (the conviction of the church is that you can limit the effects of sin somewhat by application of the law, but you cannot cure the root cause without confession of sin, repentance and above all, the forgiveness of sins by Christ through His Holy Christian Church.

-Let me illustrate...

III. The story of *Jean Valjean*...

-In our text this morning, Jesus sends his church into the world to transform it by proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ **and** by actually forgiving others for Christ's sake

-This is the incarnation of the petition in the Lord's Prayer "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"

IV. We must also meditate on the other part of the Holy Christian Church... the "communion of saints" part

-Communion refers to community... the "mutual consolation and wise counsel of the congregation" as our Lutheran confessions call it.

-You could say the "communion" part of the communion of saints is the nurturing fellowship of the congregation combined with its spiritual wisdom and admonition.

V. The film, "It's Kind of a Funny Story"

-About Craig ... don't forget to mention Muqtada, Solomon and Bobby (weird)

-"Not belonging" to belonging

-Don't all teen-agers at some time think that their family is weird and perhaps God made a mistake by putting them in this family?

-Was there ever a Christian who didn't at some point think that his congregation was weird and that he/she didn't belong?

-Thomas the doubting disciple and Judas were two who thought they didn't belong.

-Judas stayed away, stubbornly refusing to admit his sin and seek fellowship with the company of believers ... and he died tragically

-Thomas came back to the fellowship and He encountered the Grace and forgiveness of the risen Jesus Christ

-Thomas dropped to his knees in worship and responded “my Lord and my God”

-That’s an appropriate response to the Grace and Forgiveness of God

-There is healing and wholeness that comes through this weird assembly of forgiven sinners we call the Holy Christian Church.

-How do you save a world full of rottenness mixed with goodness... a world full of sinners? God showed us, you love it... Jn. 3:16

-Oh... You probably want to know how the film ended...

VI. You are here this morning because Jesus Christ breathed His Holy Spirit on you

-You are part of the communion of saints and the Holy Christian Church

-You are being transformed through the forgiveness of sins and nurturing fellowship of Jesus’ church

-Transformation of ourselves and transformation of the world is a big and difficult mission... the only thing we can do to help and sustain us is to pray... “Breathe on us, Lord Jesus”

-Do you know this song?... “Breathe on me Breath of God” (v.1)... “Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I would love what Thou dost Love and do what Thou wouldst do”