

Quasi modo geniti  
St. John 20:19-31  
April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Athens, GA  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Whose soever Sins Ye Forgive

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Sermon Text:**

“+ Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.’”

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Almighty and Ever-living God, Who hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, grant us to perfectly, and without doubt, to believe in Thy Son + Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same our Savior, + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, Hallelujah! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! The dust of the earth cannot make itself alive. Neither can dry bones make themselves flesh and blood and be alive again. The same is true of the person conceived and born dead in his sins and trespasses, he cannot bring himself to life. There is no work, no magic formula, no striving which he can do that will bring him to life. Only the Lord God can create life. Only the Holy Ghost can bring to life that which is dead. And that is exactly what our Triune Lord God did at creation when He created mankind. He formed Adam, the first man from the dust of the earth. He made him to look like what we look like. He had hair, teeth, a nose, eyes, ears, arms and legs. But he did not as yet have life in him.

Moses writes in his first book, called Genesis, that the Lord God breathed into Adam the breath of life. He made Adam alive. It was the Lord God Who gave life to all humans. Without the Lord God's breath of life, Adam would have remained just a lump of clay—just dirt shaped like a human being. But our Lord did not leave Adam a lump of clay, but gave him of His very own breath, of His very own Spirit, to bring man to life. Thus, was mankind made like no other part of creation. All the rest of creation, the Lord God created by His Word alone. But with man He breathed into him the breath of life. He gave mankind a soul that he might live.

Mankind, however, soon destroyed that creation. Eve was deceived by the serpent and ate from the tree of which the Lord God forbid them to eat, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She saw that the tree was good for food, took and ate, and gave some to her husband, Adam, who just stood by and watched it all happen. Not only did he just stand and watch it happen, but he took what his wife, Eve, gave him, and ate. Therefore, even though Eve was deceived by the serpent and took and ate

from the forbidden tree, it is Adam who is to blame. It is Adam's sin! He could have stopped the serpent's deception at any time. He could have prevented his wife Eve from eating from the tree, but he did not. He could have refused to eat from the tree itself, but he did not. Therefore, all of his children are now born dead in their sins and trespasses. Mankind is born corrupt from the womb. There are no innocent children. Everyone is conceived and born dead in sin. They cannot bring themselves to life by their own works or merits; not by their own keeping of the Law.

We are like a valley of dry bones. The Lord God brought the Prophet Ezekiel to a valley of dry bones. Those dry bones could not bring themselves to life again. It was the preaching of the prophet; it was the Word of the Lord God which he preached which caused those dry bones to become knit together into a man. It was the Word of the Lord which caused those dry bones to regain flesh and blood. But they still did not have the breath of life in them. They were like Adam when he was formed from the dust of the earth, before the Lord God breathed into them the breath of life. Therefore, the Lord God told the Prophet Ezekiel to preach to the wind—to the Breath—to make these once dried bones into living humans again. Just like at creation, the breath was breathed into the men of this valley, and they became living beings again. They became a great nation.

It was the Lord God Who brought them to life. It was the Holy Ghost Who was breathed into them that made them alive again. It is only the Lord God Who can create life. It is only the Lord of life Who can give life. We cannot be made alive by our own striving or cooperation. A dead person cannot bring itself to life. Dust cannot make itself alive. We cannot cooperate with the Holy Ghost to make ourselves a new creation. It is His work alone. Creation is the work of the Lord God alone. Redemption is the work of the Lord God alone. And, sanctification is the work of the Lord God alone. Only He can create us, redeem us, and make us holy and alive again. Only He can bring us out of death into life.

This is why what our Lord + Jesus does in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John is truly amazing! On the day of His resurrection, the first day of the week, the eighth day of the week, as we heard last Sunday, our Lord first appeared to His Apostles in the Upper Room. His first appearing occurred, according to our calendars, last Sunday evening. He appeared to them in the Upper Room while the doors were barred for fear of the Jews. He came and stood in the midst of them. He fully showed His Divinity in appearing without the need of using a door. He also showed that He was still fully man, too. For, He showed them His hands, feet, and side. He still bore the marks of His crucifixion and death as a testament that He was indeed + Jesus of Nazareth.

What He does next is even more amazing! For, He breathed on His Apostles and commanded them to forgive the sins of those who repent, and retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent. He gave them the Holy Ghost. He gave them the breath of life. They now had authority to forgive and retain sins. They now had the authority to give life to the dust of the earth, and to dry bones. The Apostles now had the authority to make dead sinners alive again by preaching into their ears the Absolution. By telling poor, miserable sinners who in their contrition and sorrow seek after righteousness, that their sins are forgiven, they could now bring that poor sinner back to life. For wheresoever forgiveness of sins is to be found, there can also be found the gift of eternal life and salvation.

Thus, our Lord + Jesus establishes the Office of the Holy Ministry. It is the Office which creates life and salvation for all those who repent of their sins and hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is the only Office of the Ministry that exists. The Office of the Holy Ministry is the only Office that is necessary. Mankind only needs to have the remission of their sins. We only need to have our sins forgiven. Without the forgiveness of sins, we remain dead. Without the preaching of the forgiveness of sins into our lifeless ears, we would remain dead in our sins and trespasses. A dead person cannot bring himself to life. But when the Word of God is heard—when the proclamation that forgiveness belongs to us—faith and life are implanted into our ears to wake us out of the sleep of death. The Holy

Ghost works through the preaching of the Minister, just He did through the preaching of the Apostles. He quickens and enlivens poor, miserable sinners who hearing the Word of the Lord God are granted the faith to cling to the life-giving proclamation of forgiveness of sins.

Only the Lord God can forgive sins. Only the Lord God can bring dead sinners to life. But He uses the Office of the Holy Ministry; He uses the Ministers of the Church to speak that life-giving Word of Absolution on His behalf. Therefore, when we hear those words of forgiveness from the Pastor, we can be confident, and have all faith, that he speaks in the stead and by the command of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We can have all faith that our sins are truly forgiven, for the Minister speaks on behalf of the Lord + Jesus, Who gave him command to forgive and retain sins.

This is why we should also hearken and take heed when the words of rebuke are spoken by the Pastor. For when he uses the Office of the Keys to bind and retain sins, he does not do so lightly. He does it to lead impenitent souls into repentance. He does it to show the Church that such sin is not to be tolerated and condoned. He does it so that there is a witness that all men should turn from their sins, and live in repentance; live lives worthy of repentance. Therefore, my dear friends, let us not turn away our ears from the rebukes of the Law, for in doing so, we remain dead in our sins and trespasses.

Let us rather, my dear friends, hearken to the voice of Absolution. Let us listen to the preaching of the Minister who desires that our sins be forgiven. For in listening to the Words of Absolution, we are once again awaked out of death into eternal life. The words of Absolution are the breath of life being spoken into our dead ears to bring us into life again. Hear the voice of our Lord + Jesus, through the Minister, declaring to us that that our sins are forgiven for His sake, and His sake alone. He has suffered and died to pay the penalty of our sins. He has perfectly fulfilled the whole will and Law of the Lord God. Therefore, He speaks unto us to receive the Spirit—to receive the breath of life—from the voice of the Pastor, who declares that our sins have been forgiven for Christ's sake. Awaken, O Sleeper! For the Lord God has called us out of death into life, and forgiven us of all our sins! Hallelujah! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

#### **The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*