

Sermon for Quasimodo Geniti (Easter 2) – John 20:19-31

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

World-renowned Christian author C.S. Lewis entitled one of his essays, “God in the Dock,” which means that God is the one on trial. He stands where the prisoners stand. It’s humiliating to be accused and interrogated. This humiliation Christ endured before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate. And God still lets Himself be humiliated for our sakes. The atheist demands that God prove His existence. Even every Christian is a “Job” asking God a thousand questions. Ironically, the One who is Judge of all and accountable to no one lets Himself be put on trial so that we might believe.

Today, Thomas put God on trial. His unbelief went beyond doubt to making an ultimatum. “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.” Hinging on Thomas’s demand was not only the question of Christ being raised from the dead, but also whether Jesus was God in the flesh and whether what He preached was true. Everything was on the line. So what happened? Christ accepted Thomas’s ultimatum so that not only Thomas but also all Christians might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing in Him we might have eternal life.

Christianity rests on the apostles’ witness that the tomb of Jesus was empty and that He appeared to Peter, the 12, and the 500. But the penultimate apostolic witness is the challenge of Thomas to insert himself into the wounds of Christ: fingers placed into the foot and hand wounds and a full man-sized hand thrust into the pierced side. But instead of sulking in sovereign majesty, immune to doubt and unbelief, God accepted the challenge. With the garment pulled aside, Thomas gazed at the sacred wounds. But it was not only Easter for Thomas. It was Easter for us!

The heart of Christianity is not the Law, with God’s demands placed on us poor wretched sinners. But it is God accepting the challenge of our unbelief, which refuses to believe without seeing. God’s appearance to Thomas is the religion of the Gospel. Easter is God’s answer to our repeated failures to storm the gates of heaven in prayer. Instead, God in Christ stormed Satan’s stronghold to release us captives from sin, death, hell, and doubt. Christ rose from the dead, not to punish sinners, but to turn unbelievers into saints – to turn a doubting Thomas into a Saint Thomas.

In Thomas we also see a reminder of the Day of Judgement. So where will your trust be when you are in the dock? When you are on trial on Judgement Day? The Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world shall make His wounds visible to us and to all men, just as he did for Thomas. At that moment, we shall look upon Him whom they pierced. By those wounds we will know that Christ died and truly rose again in the flesh. That Day of Judgement will be an Easter for us. Then we will adore the Lamb who

was slain for sin and we will say with Jacob that Christ's wounds are none other than the gate of heaven and that He Himself is the house of God.

The resurrected Christ came to doubting Thomas among the other fearful disciples. He still comes today to us unbelieving, dubious, vacillating, and apprehensive disciples. The story of Thomas is not told to confirm us in our holiness and righteousness and sinlessness, but it, and every Easter story, is told to convince us of our unbelief and doubt, so that we might find relief in the wounds of Christ, just as Thomas did.

Unlike Thomas and the company of Heaven, we haven't seen and still do not see the wounds of the Lamb of God. Nevertheless, those wounds are an everlasting fountain out of which flow the Holy Sacraments. We stand under the cross to be washed in the water from that sacred side and to drink from the flowing blood.

As God took Eve from Adam's side to be his bride, so God took the church from Christ's side to make us His bride. Now Jesus can look on us as His own body and say, "Flesh of my flesh." We are the Body of Christ, not in a figurative sense, but in a mystical yet real sense because, being washed from His side, being fed from His side, we have been engrafted into Him.

The summons given to Thomas to put his fingers into Christ's wounds and his hands into His side is not given to us. But if we cannot touch Him as Thomas did, He summons our lips and mouths to drink His blood. He overlooks our unworthiness just as He overlooked the unworthiness of Thomas to make him an apostle and confessor. He comes not to applaud our faith, but to remedy our doubt. He comes to us not because we believe, but because we do *not* believe.

He comes to us as God and man, body and soul, in flesh and blood, as the sacrificial Lamb of God with bones unbroken to show us that the One who is dead is alive forevermore. As He unveils His wounds to us in the sacraments, we cry out, "My Lord and My God!" Happy Easter! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠

This sermon was based on a sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. D.P. Scaer at the chapel of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN where he serves as the David P. Scaer chairman for dogmatic theology. It can be found in the book, "In Christ: The Collected Works of David P. Scaer, Lutheran Confessor, Vol. 1," Sussex, WI: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 278-281.