

Sermon Easter 2 2018

April 8, 2018

John 20:19-31

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read.

If you were with us last week, you might remember that I made the point that the resurrection has a number of things to teach us. Specifically, I said it gives us something concrete to point to for evidence for our faith—especially when we see the testimony of the Gospels, Paul, and the change in the disciples. I said it also teaches us of our freedom from sin, of Christ's victory for us over sin, death, and the devil. Finally I said that it teaches us that the resurrection, our eternity will be bodily.

Likewise, I said that we would talk about that some more this week. So what do we see? Well in short, it's what I said last week. God cares for us in the body. We can speak to that. We can speak to that because it's very often that we "spiritualize" the faith and make it only about our souls. And it's true that our souls are important. It's true that our souls are the part of us that somehow goes to be with the Lord after our death. It's true that our souls are in some sense the part of us which recognizes and acknowledges the Lord. But we have to be careful that this understanding doesn't interfere with the proper confession of what our bodies are. And the fact that Jesus comes to the disciples in His body, the fact that He comes and He stands before them and shows them His hands and His feet, that He tells Thomas, "Thomas come here, put your fingers in the holes in my hands, put your hand in my side," the fact that He does this tells us that this body of Christ is important. It tells us that this body of Christ is important because it is a human body. And it had to be a human body because that is who He redeemed. He redeemed human beings. He redeemed us body and soul. Because He cares about our souls and our bodies.

Think about the first article of the Creed, about Luther's explanation there, "*I believe that God has made me and all creatures that He has given me my body and soul, my reason and all my senses. And that He still takes care of them... He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*" You see this is important. It's important because this is a part of who God is as the God who created us. I make this point fairly often, but think about creation. Think about how God made Adam and Eve. He formed Adam out of the ground and made Him in a body. And then He formed Eve from the rib of Adam. Then think about when God was done with creation, what

did He say? Do you remember? At the end of every day, He looked at what He had done, He said it was good, and then at the end of it all, He looked at it and saw that it was *Tov Me'oth*. It was very good.

Did He look at it and say, “Hmm, well it’s not too bad, but it could be better?” Did He say, “Well, when I just get rid of these bodies for these people, it will all be good?” No! There and then the Word tells us it was very good. Because God cares about us in our bodies.

As we say this then, look at our own attitudes about our bodies today. It’s confusing, isn’t it? Look at us. On the one hand we worship them. Look at the temples we have made for our bodies. Look at our health clubs, our hospitals. Look even at our biggest gathering places: our sports stadiums where we worship athletes who are gifted with amazing bodily talents. And as I say this, this isn’t to tell you not to enjoy sports, or to not work out, or that you shouldn’t go to the hospital, it’s merely to acknowledge how sometimes we make idols out of our bodily lives.

Even more so, look at how we objectify the bodies of people sexually. We worship the perfect figure of a person that we might idolize for our own lusts, right? And we have idolized the misuse of bodies for sex outside of marriage. High Schoolers, I hope you have been told to be chaste, but I hope all the more I hope you have been told that sex is a blessed gift in marriage where your body which is a temple of the Holy Spirit is not misused against God’s truly good desires for it.

And that’s just how we worship the body. Look at our confusion outside of that. Then we hate our bodies, we hate how our own bodies look, we abuse them with all kinds of food that’s harmful for them. In our culture we glorify the abuse of alcohol and drugs which would harm the body. And that’s just our attitude for this life. For the life to come we can’t wait to cast off the body and have that eternity where we will be an angel, or a pure soul, or a star, or something not bodily. Think about it, that’s why cremation is so popular in our day: we don’t care what happens to this useless vessel. But Jesus cares about our bodies.

Now as I say this, to be fair, there are times when we read the Scriptures, it can seem that this is what is being said can seem to imply some of the “spiritualizing.” For example, as Jesus comes into the room, John tells us: on **“the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them.”** That makes Jesus almost sound like a spirit, doesn’t it? But look at the whole passage. Like I said, look at Jesus showing His hands and side. Look not

only here, but elsewhere where Jesus eats and drinks with His disciples. And look at what He says to them, “**Peace be with you.**” Peace to you. Now in the Greek, this word is *eirene* where we get the word irenic when we’re talking about being peaceful. But this is Jesus, we should think first about the Hebrew. What was Jesus saying? Shalom. Peace. Just like we say at the end of the service: the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. The Lord give you Shalom.

And I bring this word up because this word Shalom had a decidedly materialistic bent to it. That’s not to say that this means that God wants us to be only wealthy and comfortable, nor that it means only peace in the body, but it certainly meant that expression of well-being. In other words, Jesus is coming to the disciples and saying, “Peace be with you, peace be brought to your souls, and even to your bodies.” And as I say that, I think we can understand why. Look at what sin has done to our bodies. High Schoolers, you might not know some of this yet, but to age myself, it won’t be long before you start to feel the breakdown of your body. Pretty soon, you get sore more easily. You get tired more easily. All of it. Of course, you know it now in colds and flus, but soon you’ll see how the effect of sin attacks the body, how death comes and brings the breakdown. And then we see the desire for peace, for Shalom.

And this is exactly what Jesus brings. As He comes to this world in the body of a man, He bears the curse of sin in that body. He bears the curse of your sin. The curse for every time you have worshipped your body, for every time you have idolized the body of yourself or another. For all of that His body was broken. His body was broken for every one of your sins of thought word and deed. And it was raised for every time you despised it. Raised glorified, perfected, freed.

In fact, look at how He has cared for you in your body. He has brought you the forgiveness of sin bodily. As He spoke those words to the disciples, He said, “**As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.**” And what He is doing there is sending the disciples out with the Gospel. Christians think about how this Gospel, this promise that Jesus has died for the forgiveness of your sins, think about how this comes to you. It comes to you in the promise of that Word. As I your pastor speak that Word to you, you hear that Jesus’ blood is shed for your sins. And how do you receive that Word? Through the bodily organ of your ear. And look at how the Gospel comes to you in your body. You are

baptized, washed in water with the Word. As Peter says, not the washing of dirt from the flesh, not just a washing of your body, but through that washing the appeal to God for a clean conscience. And the Lord's Supper. The body of Christ, the blood of Christ, brought to you in with and under the bread and wine. Christians, Jesus cares about you in your body. He cares about you in providing for your earthly needs, and He cares about you by promising eternal life to you body and soul. The resurrection tells you this.

To close this thought this morning, I'd like to make one more comment for you to leave with. A comment in relation to our culture. A few weeks ago, when Stephen Hawking died there was a bit of a backlash because a famous actress, Gal Gadot, tweeted something with regard to him being free now from physical constraints. The reference was obviously to Hawking's physical disabilities which manifest themselves in his inability to walk. The actress was saying that he was now free from such physical constraints. Now hopefully as I have said what I have said today, you see that her tweet reflects this idea that eternity is not physical, not material, so there's that reflection here. However, in addition to this, there was backlash because people attacked her for being what they called, "ablist." That's like being racist against those who are disabled, if you're not familiar with the term. To be sure we need to make clear that we care about all people, something I think our Lord is clear we should do, and that we acknowledge the value and worth of every person—and I think we can see that the resurrection confirms this understanding. But I think we can also say that those who are disabled would likely choose to have freedom from disability. If they are confronted with the promise of a life where they can be freed from any malfunctioning of the body, and the promise that they won't need such things to teach them how to live well, I think everyone would like that promise. And that's what the resurrection tells us we can offer. By the resurrection, we can offer it to those with ailments like ALS—what Stephen Hawking had—and we can offer it for those whose lives are confused in this body such as those who experience things like Transgenderism—where this a dysphoria between what sex the person feels they are and the gender their body shows them to be. It is the promise of the resurrection of Jesus that your body will be raised freed from sin. Freed from the effects of death. And it will be raised to work exactly as it should. Perfectly. In fact, it tells you that even as your body is broken now, God cares for it as His creation. That's the point that you can take home for yourself and for the world: As Jesus stood resurrected before the disciples, now and in the life to come Jesus cares for you in your body. Amen.