

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany (2021)**

*His Signs Manifested His Glory*

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***“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” (John 2:11, ESV)***

From a purely humanistic point of view, life is finite, and death is forever. But according to the Word of God death slays only the flesh, the soul continues to live for eternity. Therefore, the important question regarding death is, where does the soul exist for all eternity. According to Scripture there are only two places; the unsaintly soul exist in the torment of hell and the saintly soul lives in the joy and bliss of heaven. This truth is the reason the Augsburg Confession starts with an article on God and ends with an article on the saints, because saints are the end result of God’s work of salvation, and God’s work of salvation is accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, through the Son’s work we are made saints and fellow heirs of heaven.

Today is the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, and Epiphany celebrates the truth that the Light of God has come into the world. Thus, Epiphany speaks to the gracious appearance of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ who comes to save His people with “*signs*” and wonders.

In the beginning of St. John’s Gospel, he illuminates the focus of Epiphany by writing, “*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*” (John 1:9, ESV) He was coming into the world to do the work of God through His teaching, His preaching, and His “*signs.*” Indeed, our Lord Jesus did more than could be recorded. St. John’s last words in his Gospel say, “*Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*” (John 21:25, ESV)

But in the Gospel Reading for today, St. John tells us about the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine, and he closes this account by saying, “*This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*” (John 2:11, ESV) The disciples came to believe because of what Jesus did. In fact, Jesus did many “*signs*” throughout His ministry which are recorded in the Gospels, “*signs*” which *Manifested His Glory*. In addition to the miracle at Cana, Scriptures tell us our Lord healed the sick, the leprous, the lame, the blind, the mute, and the deaf. He fed five-thousand hunger mouths, not counting women and children, with just two little fish and five barley loaves. He cast out demons, He calmed the wind and the sea, He walked on water, He caused a miraculous catch of fish, He raised the dead, and, as the Gospel Reading for today tells us, He turned water into wine. These miracles, these “*signs*” all *Manifested the Glory of Christ*.

However, in addition to these “*signs*” there are four other “*signs*” which *Manifested His Glory* that are recorded in the Gospels and of which I would like to speak this morning.

The first of these “*signs*” is His crucifixion. Now some might not think of our Lord’s death upon the Altar of the Cross as a “*sign,*” asking “How could his crucifixion be a sign that

*Manifested His Glory* when in fact it was a shameful act? His death upon the Altar of the Cross showed nothing more than that He was flesh and blood. Merely a man.”

Those who see the death of Jesus in this light fail to recall the fulness of His Passion as the apostles and evangelist recorded it, they fail to remember that when He was tried, beaten, and crucified it was more than a witness of man’s inhumanity to man, it was in fact the fulfillment of prophecy, and not just one, but many. These fulfillments of prophecy were “*signs*” confessing Our Lord’s true identity as the Son of God.

Isaiah, the Psalms, Exodus, and Numbers all give us glimpses of our Lord’s Passion. Hanging on the cross, our Lord cries out “*I thirst*” (*John 19:28, ESV*) but rather than give Him water, they gave him sour wine to drink pointing to Psalm 69:21, “*for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*” St. Matthew tells us that on the cross, Jesus cried out, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (*Matt. 27:46, ESV*) pointing to the cry of the Psalmist in Psalm 22:1. The soldiers mocked Him as did the Pharisees and other members of the Sanhedrin. They even said to Him, “*You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” (*Matthew 27:40, ESV*) pointing to Psalm 22 verses 7 & 8. At the foot of the cross the soldiers gambled for His cloths, casting lots, pointing to Psalm 22 verse 18. After His death, He was pierced by a spear pointing to Isaiah 52 and 53. And Isaiah reminds us that His crucifixion came about because many despised and rejected Him. Yet He bore our grief and carried our sorrows to the cross to fulfill His Father’s desire, the forgiveness of our sins.

From the cross He cried out, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” (*Luke 23:34, ESV*) and at the last, when He gave up His Spirit, He cried out, “*It is finished.*” (*John 19:30, ESV*) Thus, on the Altar of the Cross Jesus fulfilled His earthly mission, winning salvation, and eternal life for sinners by His atoning sacrifice. But for those who do not see these “*signs*” in the crucifixion, we answer, “Ok. You are right. His death showed He was flesh and blood and could die, but not so fast. Let us now look at His next “*sign,*” the one after He was taken from the cross, the one after He was declared dead and placed in a grave. The one that confirmed who He is. That “*sign*” is His resurrection.

As our Lord Jesus prophesied, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” (*John 2:19, ESV*) The Jews were perplexed by this statement and thought Jesus was crazy. Yet, after three days in the tomb, Christ was resurrected from the dead. He came back, resurrected to a new, immortal body. When news of this miracle reached the ears of the religious leaders, they proclaimed it to be *Fake News*. Such could not have happened. It was impossible. The stories of Jesus’ resurrection had to be a lie.

Yet here He stood before His apostles. He was not just a Spirit, a mirage, but He was flesh and bone, a man, hungry and able to eat. He was the Christ, the Son of God, in complete control of all nature and the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, He told His apostles on that first resurrection eve, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.*” (*Luke 24:46–49, ESV*) Furthermore, according to St. John on that first resurrection eve Jesus said to them, “*Peace be with you. 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. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*” (*John 20:21–23, ESV*) Thus, the church is founded on Word and Sacrament and cannot stand without them. In these words, Jesus

established the apostolic ministry and gave to it the command to proclaim the repentance of sins in His name throughout the world and to absolve those who repent.

Yes, the Gospel is given to us through His Word, especially in absolution, but our heavenly Father and His Son, also desired to give us the Gospel through other means, through the Means of Grace. Through these means, Jesus chose to join His Word to earthly elements in sacred, sacramental acts, namely Baptism and Holy Communion assuring us of our forgiveness. Thus, two more “*signs*.”

The first of these two “*signs*” is Baptism. Jesus submitted to Baptism at the River Jordan. There our Lord sought John the Baptist to be baptized by him. But John would have prevented it, yet Jesus says, “*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*” (*Matthew 3:15, ESV*) Truth is, Jesus had no sin that needed cleansing. He had no personal need for Baptism. Rather, it was to fulfill all righteousness. Therefore, in fulfilling all righteousness, His Baptism was the reverse of ours. In His baptism rather than be cleansed of sin, He took ours upon Himself so He could carry them to the cross.

In those blessed waters our Lord gives eternal life to spiritually dead sinners through the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit who engenders faith. Those who were dead to God because of their sin, are renewed and regenerated, given new lives as children of God, made spiritually alive, robed in the very righteousness of Christ and given the gift of faith to believe. At His Baptism, the voice of God declares, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*” (*Matthew 3:17, ESV*) and the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus as a dove. Without question, this was a “*sign*” that *Manifested the Sons Glory*.

And the last, but certainly not least of our Lord’s “*signs*” is His institution of the Lord’s Supper.

Sadly, many reject the truth regarding this blessed Sacrament, calling it *Fake News* and asking, “How can Christ be present in and under bread and wine?” They read the Scriptures and insist that when our Lord Jesus established this blessed Sacrament at His Last Supper with His apostles, He was speaking metaphorically or merely symbolically. But notice, since its inception the church has always taught, confessed, and believed that when our Lord established this blessed Sacrament, He promised that His body and His blood would be in and under the bread and wine of this holy Sacrament.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, St. Paul states the church’s understanding of this blessed and holy meal, writing, “*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*” (*1 Corinthians 10:16, ESV*) and again, “*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*” (*1 Corinthians 11:23–29, ESV*) The participation St. Paul speaks of is a true and real participation, a receiving, of the flesh and blood of Christ that was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins upon the Altar of the Cross. It is not a metaphor or symbolic.

Like many today, the Jews were shocked by any word that associated Christ with bread or blood. St. John tells us, ***“So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” (John 6:41, ESV) To which Jesus responds, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:51, ESV) And the Jews responded, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6:52, ESV) Once again the broadcasters of Fake News are at it. To double down on their unbelief, Jesus also said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:53–54, ESV)***

All of these ***“signs”*** have one purpose, to draw you to Him so that you may believe, be forgiven, and rescued from sin, death, and the devil. These ***“signs”*** are meant for your salvation, making you saints, children of God, children who will live with Him for all eternity. These ***“signs”*** *Manifest the Glory of God’s Son, Jesus Christ* that He may be a Light shining in your heart, illuminating the path which leads you to heaven. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.