

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 20:19-31 has a lot to say about faith and doubt – about the power to forgive that Jesus gives to His Church – and about the need to be gathered together as a community of faith. But I want to focus on what John writes at the end of this section.

John writes: “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

That’s the reason why God has given us His Word. It all points to Jesus. These things are written so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ – that He is our Lord and Savior – and that by believing, we might have life in His name.

God is at work through His Word to draw us to Himself. He is at work through His Word to reveal Himself to us. He is at work to show us our sin and its dangers and to show us how He has rescued us from that. The primary purpose of God’s Word is to show us all that Jesus has done for us and freely gives to us by faith in Him.

Day Two

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Today’s devotion focused on focused on humility (1 Peter 5:6-7). We are, as Peter writes, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We are to do that because, first, He loves us and cares for our every need. And second, we are to do that because that’s what Adam failed to do in the Garden. He lifted himself up – he exalted himself above God and His authority – when he ate the forbidden fruit.

Anyone who exalts himself above God will be humbled. They will fall. To think that we can exalt ourselves above God and His authority is a lie of the devil. That’s what he did to Adam and Eve when he told them that they would become just like God when they ate the fruit. But they didn’t. They fell. They broke their relationship with God driving a wedge between them and God by their sin.

That’s why Peter tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Confessing that Jesus is our Lord and Savior is evidence that we have been humbled. Daily confessing our sin and remembering God’s promises attached to Baptism, keeps us in that humility.

And it is a position of strength. To stand under the mighty hand of God – to submit to His authority – is a secure place to be. We have been raised to life. We are a new creation. We have, by the forgiveness of our sin, been made whole. There is nothing for us to do or to prove. We need only rest in the gift. We need only rest in the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ and the resurrection He shares.

Day Three

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This verse from Acts (4:29) is part of a prayer that the community of believers offered up to God after Peter and John returned from standing before the Sanhedrin. They were brought before the Council because God had used Peter to heal a man who had been lame. In an attempt to prevent more people from believing in Jesus, they order Peter and John to stop speaking to anyone in Jesus’ name.

Peter replies that they cannot help speaking about what they have seen and heard. That includes the resurrection, Jesus’ opening their minds to understand Scripture and the coming of the Holy Spirit. So the community of faith offers up a prayer that they continue to testify to Jesus and His saving work.

We need to pray the same prayer. We need to ask God to make us bold to share His Word – to speak to others about Jesus and His saving work. Jesus is the Word of Life and there are powers at work to silence that Word – powers that evidence themselves through the hostility and threats that come because we share our faith.

May God strengthen us as He did those in the early New Testament Church so that we continue to share the hope that is ours in Jesus and the resurrection that He shares.

Day Four

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Today's verse (Hebrews 13:8) is one of great comfort. In our lives and in this world where things are constantly changing – when you can't be sure of what you will encounter each day – it is a comfort to know that Jesus Christ is the same all the time.

His mercy never changes. He never fails to forgive. All that He accomplished through His life, death and resurrection is still the same. It is still in effect. All that is mine by faith in Jesus and His saving work done for me is still mine even when I am beaten down by the troubles of this world.

I have been anchored to that Rock who never changes – who can't be moved. He holds me in His hand and nothing can snatch me from His grasp.

Day Five

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In Galatians 3:27, Paul writes that we have put on Christ. A better way to think about that is that we have been hidden in Christ. Why would Paul write that? What is the benefit to us? Paul writes that as good news. Why is being hidden in Christ a good thing?

Go back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve have just eaten the forbidden fruit. They realize that they are naked. And they are ashamed. So they try to hide their nakedness with fig leaves. But it doesn't work. When they hear God in the Garden, they hide. They are still ashamed.

Christ's robe of righteousness is the only covering that hides us – that clothes our nakedness and our shame. Hidden in Christ, we are properly clothed to come before God. Hidden in Christ's righteousness, we are forgiven. We wear the clothes of a son or daughter. We are welcomed home as one of the family.

That is God's gift to us. It comes to us in Baptism. God works through the power of His Word joined with the waters of Baptism to clothe us – to cover our nakedness – to forgive us and make us new. We have been united with Jesus in His death and life so that we can become children of God – forgiven and free.