

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus, our risen Lord and Saviour be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is “Water, Blood, and Spirit crying” based on the Epistle reading from 1<sup>st</sup> John, chapter 5. Let us pray... Amen.

Jesus’ words from our reading today, depending on how you read them, can be a little disconcerting. In the Gospel Jesus said: **“<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”**(John 15:9) **“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you.”**(John 15:12-13)

John writes something similar in today’s Epistle reading: **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”**(1 John 5:1-3)

There is a lot of talking about love and even more of obeying in these two readings. It sounds like a whole bunch of law, with little to no Gospel. But at first glance it doesn’t sound too tough does it? Just love God and follow His commandments, all of them, all the time, and that way you will know you are a child of God. But really, is this even possible. When asked by a lawyer what the greatest command was, Jesus simply answered: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**(Matthew 22:37-40”

If these were the only words of Jesus recorded I would feel very uncomfortable because if it were necessary for me to follow these two commands perfectly to be saved, I would be lost eternally. No questions asked. I would not have a snowball’s chance in fires of hell because the fires of hell would be all I could look forward to. Still, God rightly and justly expects us to follow His law and commands perfectly. Trying hard and doing our best is not good enough.

I have to confess that I have sinned, and sinned grievously against the neighbours God has surrounded me with in this life. I do not always care for, watch over, protect, provide for, and share the love of God with them as I should. I have ignored their pleas for help. I have turned a blind eye to their earthly needs. On top of that, I do not always shared God’s Word and His promises and His forgiveness to protect my own selfishness cares and comforts.

On top of that, I have also sinned against God in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by own fault, by my own most grievous fault. There are times when I do not fully trusted God and

His Word to do what He clearly promises to do in them and through them, even though I know better. There are times when I fear other people more than I fear God. There are times when I am more concerned about what others might think of me than I am with what God expects from me, times when my pride, my selfish desires, and my feelings get in the way of doing what God fully and rightly expects.

Now I know better and do try hard not to sin, usually, and to follow God’s commands, but there are still times when I find myself doing what I hate. I understand Paul and his struggle, recorded in Romans chapter seven, when he says **“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”**(Romans 7:15,17-18)

So if the super apostle Paul can’t fully keep God’s Law, and I can’t fully keep it, how are you doing with it? And if God hates sin, all sin, and every sin, where does this leave us; you, me, and all people?

Now is when we have to go back to Jesus’ Word. Jesus said: **“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you”**(John 15:9), and you, and you, and you, and all of you. Despite our sinfulness, our unworthiness, our shortcomings, and all our failings, Jesus is still speaking and He is not just talking to His disciples, He is talking to each of us personally. Take a moment, or ten, to let that fully sink in.

As the Father, God Almighty, the Creator of the universe loved Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Second person of the Trinity from eternity, Jesus also loves you.

As John wrote, **“his commandments are not burdensome.”**(1 John 5:3) For Jesus said: **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**(Matthew 11:28-30) When people tried to justify themselves before God by works of the Law, Jesus explained the full expectations of the Law to crush them and to bring them to repentance and faith in Himself, the Word made flesh.

Only in Christ and His love is there rest for the burdened heart. For the demands of God’s Law are beyond our ability, the Gospel, cries out the Good News of Jesus Christ is and His love for us.

The “*Water, Blood, and Spirit crying*” are not crying tears of pain or sorrow, they are shouting out the Good News of Christ, Who He is and all He has done for you, in tears of joy.

They are not quiet sobs, rather they are a thunderous proclamation of our hope in our Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

As the Father has loved Me, Jesus says, I love you! He doesn't just feel it, rather Jesus demonstrated what His love really looks like. This Jesus, the Christ, is who John spends His entire Gospel, three letters, and Apocalypse—Revelation—talking and focused on. John tells us today in his first letter, “**Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.**”(1 John 5:1)

John further identifies Jesus as “**He who came by water and the blood**”(1 John 5:6) referring to Jesus' Baptism on the one hand and Jesus' crucifixion on the other. God's love, the “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**”(John 3:16) kind of love is revealed in all of what Jesus did in His earthly ministry, but is most clearly revealed in His sacrificial death on the cross for the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world. And John the apostle, and the only disciple to personally witness Jesus' crucifixion, gives the “**water and the blood**” special attention as Jesus' earthly ministry climaxed in His sacrificial death on the cross (John 19:31-34). In John's narrative, in his Gospel, the flow of blood and water from Jesus' pierced side is important evidence as he recorded: “**But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. 35 He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.**”(John 19:34-35)

A testimony is related to the verb to testify; and John's testimony is certain because it is not John who is testifying but because “**the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.**”(1 John 5:6) A testimony is not something you keep in a box; rather it is something you can't keep in your mouth. John heard the voice of the Father and witnessed the testimony of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' Baptism (*Mt 3:16*), marking Him as the Christ whose coming was foretold and as the Son of God (*Jn 1:29-34*). He is the Spirit of Truth because Jesus is the Truth (*Jn 14:6*). The Holy Spirit teaches believers the truth and leads believers into all truth (*Jn 14:26; 16:13-14*). Christ's crucifixion and Baptism intimately connect with our own Baptism, as Luther noted:

“The water of Baptism is sanctified—*made holy*—through the blood of Christ. ... The water cannot be proclaimed without the blood. Nor is the blood of Christ given without the water of Baptism. Besides, the blood and the water do not come to us except at the insistence of the Holy Spirit, who is in the Word. Therefore those three cannot be separated, but the three do one thing... For these three constantly accompany one another, and through the Word a daily immersion and a perpetual Baptism takes place, a perpetual shedding of the blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit, a continual cleansing from sins.”(LW 30:314-315)

In Baptism, “**You did not choose Jesus, but He chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide**”(John 15:16). He chose you, He

loves you, He forgives you all our sins, even the ones you have trouble believing He could forgive you of. In Baptism, by water and the Word, you were washed in Christ's blood and that washing remains. In Baptism you were made a member of the body of the Holy Christian church and a member of the communion of saints. By water and the Word the Holy Spirit was given to you and He continues to live and abide in you; not by your work, but by His grace and promise. As for sin, God still hates sin, but in Christ you are completely covered and forgiven. St Augustine, wrote: “*All of God's commandments are fulfilled when whatever is not done, is forgiven.*”(ApAC, v, 51)

As the Father has loved Me, Christ Jesus says, I have loved you. This is what the water, blood, and Spirit do cry out: you are God's own by the work of the Holy Spirit bringing you Christ, His water and blood, through God's Word and Sacrament. In Christ, in faith, you already have already overcome this world and are safe in Jesus' arms. In Christ, in faith, you share in His victory. In Christ, in faith, the water, blood, and Spirit also are shared through you, your good works, your actions, your words.

The love of God continues to come to you, with the water, blood, and spirit crying out and bringing you Christ and His forgiveness. In His Word you hear, without a shadow of a doubt, ‘your sins are forgiven.’ Yes all of them. In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit brings to your lips Jesus very own body and blood, crucified and risen, for the forgiveness of all your sins. In the Lord's Supper, heaven meets earth, the crucified and risen Lord comes to your mouth to abide in you so you can also abide in Him. Here He strengthens your faith and trust in God as the Spirit brings Christ blood, His Grace, and His forgiveness to you.

Rejoice, as the Father has loved Jesus, Jesus loves you, and He abides in you so you can abide in Him. Here is His grace. Here is His forgiveness, His love, for your eternal salvation. Thanks be to God. Amen!

\* This sermon belongs to Christ and His Church because it is taken from His Word. Please feel free to copy or use it accordingly. I expect people to copy my sermons otherwise I would not post them. I only ask that you quote accurately if you attribute anything to me. Should you decide to contact me, I would be very interested in knowing where you are. Please include the name of your city, province or state, and country when contacting me.