



President Timothy Teuscher

On the first day of the week

“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, Jesus came and stood among them” (John 20:19). So we read in St. John’s Gospel concerning the first Easter—the appointed Gospel read every year on the Second Sunday of Easter whether from the three-year lectionary series used in most of our congregations or the old one-year series. And for good reason; after all, this familiar account is, in a sense, the first Divine Service of the New Testament church—one repeated on every Lord’s Day for the past 2,000 years or so, and that takes place in our congregations, not only once a year whenever Easter rolls around, but on every ‘Little Easter,’— every Sunday.

Just as on the evening of that first day of the week Jesus’ disciples were together, so it is that the Lord’s people, you and I, still gather in the Lord’s House on the Lord’s Day—the first day of the week, Sunday, the day of our Lord’s resurrection.

When the disciples were together in the upper room that first Easter evening, the risen Lord appeared to them. He still appears to us today when we are gathered on the Lord’s Day. Remember what He promised? “For where two or three have been gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

When Thomas sees the risen Lord a week later, his doubts are removed, he believes, and then exclaims in that great confession of faith, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). We, too, upon seeing the risen Lord in the Sacrament and mirrored in His holy

Word, cannot but also exclaim and confess the same thing in the words of the Creed: “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.”

When Jesus appeared to His disciples that first Easter evening, the first words He spoke to them were “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). The risen Lord still speaks those same words to us when we are gathered together on the Lord’s Day: “The peace of God, which

On every Lord’s Day Jesus still comes and stands among us...

passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” . . . “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” . . . “Depart in peace.” . . . “The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace.”

In the upper room on Easter evening the risen Lord said to the disciples, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:23). On the Lord’s Day we also hear and receive this apostolic commission from His called and ordained servants: “In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins.” . . . “I forgive you all your sins.”

On that first Easter evening Jesus showed His disciples His hands and His side, and they “were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20). We too see the risen Lord’s hands and side on the Lord’s Day: His very body and blood in the bread and wine of the Holy Sacrament and then exclaim joyfully upon partaking of it: “Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of every people” (cf Luke 2:29-32).

So, on every Lord’s Day since that first Easter Day, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, decade after decade, century after century, it is most certainly true that on the first day of the week, when the disciples are together, Jesus still comes and stands among us, shows us His hands and side, speaks His Word of peace to us, and bestows upon us His forgiveness and joy. That is, of course, if we are actually among those gathered together in the Lord’s House on the Lord’s Day around the Lord’s Word! Otherwise, to use the words of St. Paul from his great resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians, “your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17).

The hymn writer sums it up in these words:

“This day, God’s people meeting,
His Holy Scripture hear;
His living presence greeting,
Through bread and wine made near.
We journey on, believing,
Renewed with heav’nly might,
From grace more grace receiving,
On this blest day of light”
(LSB 906 v3).