**Sermon for the Fifth Sunday of Easter-C**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aiken, South Carolina**

05-18-25

John 13:31-35

Jesus Christ has come. He has fulfilled God’s holy law through his perfectly sinless life. He has faithfully proclaimed the advent of the kingdom of God, that is, the kingdom of grace, and has called all to repent and believe.

He has willingly submitted to evil men, who slandered him, viciously beat him, and nailed him upon the cross to die. Three days after his body was laid in a tomb, he showed himself gloriously resurrected from the dead.

Jesus’ resurrection is the indisputable proof that, truly, now the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.

His glory is in the fact that, in all of this, he has defeated Satan, both God’s enemy and yours, and with Satan’s defeat, he has also removed the teeth from the jaws of death, and removed from you the stain of sin.

Because of Jesus’ completed, glorious work, your sins are forgiven, you have eternal life, and the assurance of eternity in heaven, in the blessed presence of Jesus Christ himself.

Nobody is left out. Salvation has been given to all mankind, and is made one’s own the very moment that one repents of their sin, and believes that Jesus’ saving work is for them too.

*“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”*  Just think; these words were not spoken by Jesus after his resurrection, but in the Upper Room, at the Last Supper, after Judas had gone out into the night, on his mission of betrayal, that would culminate in Jesus’ ghastly, agonizing, suffering and death.

Betrayal, suffering, and death; all of this Jesus knowingly, willingly, suffered for you, in order to save you from hell and eternal damnation, and make you God’s own beloved child. He has done it; it is finished. God the Father is glorified in the Son, and the Son in the Father; for the glory of God is to have mercy.

Though you and I are sinful and unclean; though the inherited stain of original sin has soiled the imaginations of our hearts, crept into our words, and, all too often, shows itself in both our acts, and our failures to act, God doesn’t just cast us aside as garbage. Instead, he loves us.

The unmerited, undeserved love that the Lord God has for you is such that it compels him to stoop down, take upon himself flesh and blood, and live as a pauper in his own fallen creation.

The love that the Lord God has for you moves him to endure the cross, looking beyond to the joy of receiving you back to himself, through his sacrificial death, which has atoned for all of your sin.

Only he could do this; not you; not anyone else. Only God in the flesh, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, could make clean what was unclean; and he has.

This gospel is proclaimed throughout the world by means of the Scriptures. This gospel is given to you in holy baptism, along with the Holy Spirit, who awakens faith in the forgiveness and eternal life that you received in that holy water, in which you have been united to Jesus Christ.

This gospel comes to you most personally as Jesus Christ gives you his very self, by means of the consecrated bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper.

In all of these ways, God assures you that he loves you, and that your sins are forgiven, because the glory of God is to have mercy; and the glory of God is Jesus Christ crucified, died, and raised again from the dead, for you.

This same Jesus calls us to love as he loves us. Jesus said; *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

When we love as Jesus has loved us, the world knows that we are His disciples. Like all other commandments, His commandment that we love one another is one that we never really fulfill perfectly, because, this side of eternity, we are not perfect.

However, because the Spirit of God dwells within us, it is our desire to love as God loves us. The new man in you, and me, and in all whose faith is in Christ, desires to love sacrificially; to give of one’s self for the well-being of the neighbor.

The love of Christ within us desires to be shared with others, because the new man within us desires, as God desires, that they, too, would hear of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and believe, and be saved.

The love of Christ within us moves us to have love for one another. The bond of Christian love among believers is almost palpable.

The love of Christ moves us to be patient and understanding with each other; to be reconciled to each other when our sinful side gets the better of us; to reach out to our brother or sister in Christ when we see them going astray, and bring them back into the fold; back to the cross; back to eternal life.

Jesus Christ has gone where we cannot go; to the cross; to victory over Satan; to mankind’s redemption. Having won salvation for us, Jesus sends us out into this world, into our lives and vocations, with a new commandment; love each other as I have loved you.

He has set you free to do so, and he goes with you to shine forth in your interactions with others. When and where we fall short, he forgives us, and we go on.

The glory of God is to have mercy, and the glory of man is to serve the Lord with thankfulness and praise, and let Jesus love others through us.

May the Lord, Jesus Christ, through His Word and Sacrament, help us to continue our growth in Him, that He may so use our lives to the glory of His holy Name. Amen.