

## Easter 5 – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Sermon Text: 1 John 4:7-21

Theme: “*Born of God*”

Grace, peace and mercy to you from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Today is a special day. It is God’s day. It is a day in which He comes to serve his faithful people who are called and gathered by the Holy Spirit around His Word. This is God’s day and you are God’s holy people.

Today, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009 is special for another reason. Three young people from Our Saviour Lutheran Church – Atherton will publicly confirm the faith that was already given to them in holy baptism. We call this special event, Confirmation.

This day just keeps on getting better for it is today we also celebrate Mother’s Day. Happy Mother’s Day to all the mums in our congregation or those who would be mums. It is right and proper that the Christian Church celebrates the gift of life given through the blessing of mothers. As we celebrate life, for more many reasons it is a very special day to be born of God.

Heavenly Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

### Who God is

Many of you will be familiar with the programme we have been using for confirmation studies over the past few years. It is called “The Big Picture” and as the name suggests, it looks at the big issues related to the Christian faith. And the real big issues always come back to relationships, primarily the relationship between God and us; then the relationships between one another. The resources we use to learn about these relationships are God’s Word, Luther’s Small Catechism, and the liturgy of Sunday’s Divine Service.

The beginning of any study of the Christian faith should begin with who God is. This is foundational is we are to understand why we would worship God in the first place.

Today’s readings on what is the fifth Sunday of Easter tell us a great deal about who God is and how we might live out our relationships, both with God and with other people. In our second reading, John describes God as being love – “God is love”. As nice as this might sound, what on earth does it mean?

Well rather than an intangible descent into some notion of romantic, fluffy, ‘nice’ love, John makes God’s love a concrete reality that we can know and understand. John writes, “In this the love of God was made manifest (or displayed) among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” In this one verse we are taught that all humanity has a problem which leads to our death. But rather than leave us in our state of death, God who loves us, sent Jesus Christ so we might not die but have life.

This is who God is for us, *love*, and this is how he is love for us – that he gives us the gift of life. In our material culture we can become easily confused by advertising which promotes the idea that if we really love someone, we’ll give them what they want. We can reduce love to the passing on of possessions. Even on this special day in which we celebrate mothers, how much advertising is geared towards giving mum a gift we think she would like. This is because it can be so much easier to buy something that to really love someone and this means giving yourself – your time, who you really are.

This isn't meant as a criticism for anyone who has bought a gift for their mum. I'm hoping my mother-in-law appreciates the frying pan as much as anyone else – but how much better is the love that comes from sharing time together when she will visit our family later in the year.

It's the same with God and his love for us. We might want him to give us the things we think we want, but first and foremost God has already given us the greatest gift – life and there perfect eternal life that comes through Jesus Christ. We may ask God for all kinds of things, and some of these will be really appropriate – things like good health, for our children to be kept safe, for our church to grow as we shine the light of Christ into our community. God may give us these good things; he may even give us things that are a little more selfish in nature. But first and foremost our Heavenly Father gives us the gift of life through his Son, Jesus Christ.

### **Who we are**

We spend some time in confirmation classes talking about God's work in creation. God creating – Good. Into God's good creation we then describe how sin came into the world which was through Adam and Eve succumbing to the temptations of Satan. We call this, Humans sinning – Evil. And since the first fall of humanity, this has been our lot. We are all tainted with the guilt of this original sin and from this sinful nature we are naturally turned away from God. Luther describes in his Small Catechism that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, or come to Him.

God's warning to Adam and Eve was not to eat the forbidden fruit because if you eat it, you will surely die. And humanity has died a spiritual death which caused a catastrophic separation between God and us, his people created for relationship with him.

### **What God has done for us**

The fruit of this sinful state is that we deserve God's punishment. And this is where God demonstrates his love for us. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." What does it mean that Jesus would be our propitiation? The best way to show what it means is to have one of our confirmees stand up in class and describe how they have done something wrong. If mum or dad were to smack them, propitiation is for their brother or sister to stand between their bottom and mum or dad's hand. This is how God has shown his love for us, that Jesus has bridged the gap between us and our Heavenly Father. He took on the punishment that was meant for us – death. This means we are born to life from God himself.

In our confirmation classes we describe the simple arc of God Creating – Good; Humans sinning – Evil; Jesus Christ – winning salvation; the Holy Spirit – Delivering Salvation; then "so what?" It's all well and good to describe this, but as Christian people we are now called to live this out and we call this "Christian Living – being confirmed".

John says we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. So people see the witness of our faith, the hope we have in Jesus to fulfil God's promise to us. "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us." And this is the light, filled with love that we are called to shine in the world wherever God has put us.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts our fear. For fear has to do with punishment. We can either try to obey God's commandments because we are afraid of him and his punishment, or we can live our lives in love because we believe and trust that God has first loved us.

Dear friends, you are born of God. As his baptised children you have been born to new life, a new life of faith and love which was poured into you as you were baptised in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Lee, David, and Ryan are publicly confirming this faith that was given to them when they were baptised but the truth is, you all publicly confirm the faith you have whenever you bear witness to God's work in your lives. On this special day, shine the light of Christ because you are truly born of God.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.