

Christ is risen!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Everything that belongs to God the Father
is yours in Christ Jesus the Son
through the work and word of the Holy Spirit.

What belongs to God is joy.
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share an unbreakable joy.
They're at peace with one another and nothing stands in their way.
There's no betrayal, no hatred, no anger, no talking behind the other's back.
They share the kingdom, they share the power, and they share the glory.
Each delights in the other as in Himself.
This blessed, Holy Trinity is known chiefly for His joy.

And in Jesus Christ all of this joy is yours.
It's yours because you have been brought into Christ.
You've been Baptized *into Christ* [—just like Zayla this morning].
You've been clothed with Christ.
You've died with Christ.
And in Him is your resurrection.
All that is Christ's is yours:
His life, His death, His resurrection, His *joy*.

All this is sure and certain because the Holy Spirit and declared it all to you.
And He doesn't lie.
He takes what is Christ's and gives it to you.
His perfection, His righteousness, His holiness, His love, His joy—
all of these are now yours as gifts from God by His Spirit.
That's His job, His work: to be the gift giver.
So that all that is Christ's is God's and all that is God's is now yours.

But we mess this beautiful picture up all the time.
We'd prefer to have it differently.
We want the Spirit, but not in any particular way.
We want to be spiritual, but we don't want Him tied to Baptism, or the Word,
or the ways He promises to be found.
We want God to be free—
but free on our terms, so that we can feel Him and somehow know He's just there.
We want control.
We want a part in it.
We refuse to believe that the Spirit comes with the Word,
that He is to be found in the Church—
the communion of saints.

In the Large Catechism, Dr. Luther says,

“Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe on Him, and have Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel.” (LC II.38)

Too often we make the Church a good work that we do.
We’re hardly bothered by our family or friends who refuse to come.
We say, “That’s okay, I know they’re still a Christian.”

But how?

How can anyone be a Christian when they’re cut off from Christ?
How can the faith be given when the Spirit isn’t there to give it?

Again Luther says,

“For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord.” (LC II.45)

This is the work of the Holy Spirit: to give you Christ.
And not as the world gives—
but Christ the crucified,
Christ who, *in a little while*, will not be seen anymore,
Christ who dies, who gets buried, who seems distant, and removed from our eyes.
Christ who gives Himself up to suffering, and who joins you in your suffering.

At the cross the world rejoiced.
Satan led the victory chorus of demons and unbelieving men.
There they thought they had their proof that Jesus was just like other men.

And at the cross the disciples wept.
And with them the Father and the Holy Spirit, the angels and the archangels.
For a little while there was weeping and lamenting—
sorrow, both in heaven above and among the faithful below.

But again, *in a little while*, on the third day, sorrow turned to joy.
Just as the anguish of bearing a child dissolves at the new life brought into this world,
so does our sorrow turn to joy at the proclamation: HE IS RISEN!

Rising from the dead belongs to Christ because He is the life of the world.
And here, in this Church, in this communion of saints, the Holy Spirit takes what is His,
and declares it all to you.

What goes for Christ goes for you:
life, forgiveness, resurrection, and an unbreakable *joy*—
even when everything you see and feel tell you differently.

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