

“Now What?”  
(1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5-2:2)  
Pastor Espinosa

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Alleluia! Christ is risen! [response: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]. And He is risen indeed, but...*now* what?

The risen, living Lord Jesus preaches to us, intercedes for us, and works all things for the good of all of you, His children [summary of last week’s conclusion], but while all of these things are true, these descriptors are about *His* ongoing work. The risen Lord continues to be quite active, but are you confined only to sheer reception? Is that the summary of the Christian life? Is the “what now?” (the way the resurrection of our Lord Jesus impacts our lives today?): “just kick back and relax?” In our first reading from Acts, the answer is an emphatic: “no way, no how!” The fellowship of the first century Christian Church was not only expressed through a common confession of faith, but through a conscientious service to their fellow Christians so that “there was not a needy person among them.” (Acts 4:34) Faith confessed and faith transformed into mercy go hand-in-hand. In the Gospel from John 20, the risen Lord Jesus gives His apostles His peace and the Holy Spirit, but these gifts were not given for the apostles to stare at themselves to say, “what a good boy am I,” but they were given so that the apostles would go forth to actively convey these same gifts to everyone else who would receive them! This was a joyful ministry, but it was also an arduous one. It was hard work. It was God’s work, but it was work. The risen Lord Jesus produces lives that work, faith that works. Thus the Lutheran Confessions teach that good works are necessary; not necessary for salvation, but necessary because faith produces the fruits of faith.

Of course we need to take care in our teaching here, because every aspect of our active lives in Christ – in our state of grace – is produced and caused by God’s gift of grace. The point here is that the end result in what we experience is not living as a bump on the log. Christ is living. He gives us a new life. This new life is overflowing. You can’t miss it. It shows Jesus!

Francis A. Schaeffer was acutely concerned about the question, “how should we then live?” In his book entitled with this very question, “How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture,” he warned us about the challenges set before us: “the hallmark of the present generation of humanistic thinking” is the acceptance of what Schaeffer referred to as “the dichotomy”. What did he mean by this? He meant that our culture has separated meaning and values from reason. We are making major decisions about how to live – how we want to live – based purely on our base desires without the support of sound reason. Schaeffer wrote prophetically back in the 70’s and we have seen the truth of his words in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dr. Robert George, author, and professor, Princeton University, warns us about the current cultural onslaughts against marriage: marriage is becoming a legal convention to support an emotional union which may or may not be open to children and from the liberal perspective is as right as any other. This is as George puts it “secular orthodoxy.” (Dr. Robert George, presentation: “In Defense of Life and Liberty: Natural Law and Reason,” LCMS Life Conference, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015) Marriage, however, is more than simply an emotional bond. The Word of God teaches that “the two will become one flesh.” This isn’t just a metaphor, but corresponds to what *is*. Marriage constitutes a biological union at every level of human existence. Reproduction is a single act, but it isn’t – naturally – performed individually. Male and female become one organically, but the current wave in our culture is to make marriage a matter of personal preference. George warns that secularism wants to totally privatize religion and make secularism itself into the predominant established religion. The break-down in society corresponds to the break-down of marriage...and the break-down of marriage will have a profound effect on our religious freedom.

This summer the Supreme Court will issue another ruling on same-sex marriage and it pertains to states’ rights. And the lure from the culture is represented by what actor Brad Pitt has said, “It is each American’s constitutional right to marry the person they love, no matter what state they inhabit. No state should decide who can marry and who cannot.” (LC-MS Reporter April 2015). The Word of God has a different perspective: “[Jesus] answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.’” (Matthew 19:4-6) Rev. Richard Eyer said eloquently as quoted by our LCMS Reporter: “Marriage cannot be whatever a society wants it to be. We as Christians bear witness to the truth, and the dark ages of sin will not change it.”

Schaeffer went on to teach that once we become aware of the danger against the faith and against the Church, “as Christians we are not only to *know* the right world view, the world view that tells us the truth of what *is*, but consciously to *act* upon that world view so as to influence society in all its parts and facets across the whole spectrum of life, as much as we can to the extent of our individual and collective ability.” He also warns us. We have to be realistic. If we would live out our faith, it will come at a cost. Again, prophetically, he warned that if we do nothing, then we or our children [and all who profess Christ] will eventually be construed as the *enemy* of society and the state. (*How Should We Then Live*, 256)

It’s time to get busy – not through our own strength – but by the grace and power of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. And this is why our epistle from 1<sup>st</sup> John is so invaluable. At 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5, St. John writes, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” God is light. Kretzmann: “Light is purity, holiness; He is the Source of all true knowledge, wisdom, happiness, and holiness...As light is the symbol of purity, goodness and perfection, so, on the other hand, darkness

symbolizes ignorance, sinfulness, misery, corruption.” (Buls quotes Kretzmann, Exegetical Notes Epistle Texts, Series B, Festival Season Sundays) Bruce adds the insight that light is not only a metaphor for life, but brings out the further aspect of spiritual illumination (F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970. 41.)

This is to say that Christ – Risen from death who has all power and all authority – raises *you* Christian not only for your complete forgiveness, but also for a new life! And this life refuses to remain in darkness. This life walks in the truth of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three things that the Lord teaches through St. John that demonstrates that we live actively in our new lives in the Risen Lord:

1. We don’t walk in darkness, but walk in light (vv 6-7).
2. We don’t deny our sin, but we confess our sins (vv 8-9).
3. We don’t say we have not sinned, but if we do sin, we return to Jesus our Advocate and Propitiation (vv 10, 2:1-2).

With all the attacks on the truth, God’s Word, marriage, the unborn, the family, the world is walking in darkness; the world is denying sin pretending it does not exist; and denies its rebellion while also denying the only Savior. We can’t do this. We can’t go along with the crowd and we must acknowledge our complacency that would lead us to do precisely that.

Our flesh and the world wants to live in heresy and this amounts to lying and not living in the truth. “If we are addicted to sin, if we in any way serve sin and corruption, then our entire life is a lie.” (Buls quotes Kretzmann again, 104) Irenaeus says, “A lie has no fellowship with the truth, any more than light with darkness. The presence of one excludes the other.” (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament XI, 170) And Hilary of Arles states: “The truth is light, so if we do not walk according to it, we are in the dark.” (Ibid., 170) Our flesh loves the dark...and the world applauds us to join it in the walk of death. Don’t do it Christian. Turn from it and hear why you can and will:

Verse 7 of 1<sup>st</sup> John 1 teaches more than just being forgiven by the blood of Christ, but is bold to use this word: “cleanses.” This is remarkable. Jesus’ work cannot be confined to ancient history. It is as if the blood of the risen Savior is still working...His blood cleanses. We have a member of this congregation who has told me that if everyone in this congregation and community fully knew the power of Holy Communion, we would have people lining up from out the doors to receive the Sacrament! The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. It actively cleanses your conscience from guilt and moral defilement. The blood of Jesus is not a dead blood, but a living blood that gives life to the world. Jesus is living, He is resurrected, it means

that His blood is a living blood. It never dies! And this living blood of our Resurrected Lord forgives and removes the stain of sin from your life!

This blood of your Risen Champion is what rescues you from darkness and brings you into the light of God! Still keep it all perspective: “even if we are shown to be doing the works of light, and even if we are seen to be maintaining the bonds of mutual love, we must never think that we can be cleansed from our sins by our own progress and effort, as the last part of the verse reminds us [that is “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.]” (ACC, Bede, p. 171)

But some Christians start to worry, “But what if I feel myself sinking into darkness again.?” Don’t worry, the Risen Lord has got you covered. He gifts you with something called “confession.” We underestimate this gift. King David was in darkness after his lust, his adultery, his deception, his further deception, and his murdering. Nathan came to him and David confessed before the Lord’s servant. David was given the opportunity to confess. He did. David wrote about this gift: “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.” (Psalm 32:3-5)

In response to your grace-generated confession is that the Lord forgives you – takes away your guilt – this means that you’re clean. Bede taught: “Since we cannot live in this world without sin, the first hope we have of salvation is through confession, nor should anyone be proud enough to claim that he is righteous in God’s sight. The next step is love, which John often commends to us in this letter, because love covers a multitude of sins. (ACC, pp 172-173)

There’s that new resurrected life again. Christ is risen! That means you walk in the light, you confess...and you love. There’s that resurrected life again. We will even love this world that is running from God! We must do this right? We must serve this world, because Jesus died and rose for her.

But what if we feel our weakness and sin along the way? Of course we will even while the Lord does not wish for us to get the idea that sin may be regarded as a normal phenomenon in the Christian life. (Bruce, 48) In fact, we are given the Lord’s wisdom that sin is often resisted best when we resist its beginnings. (Buls, 106) By grace, we also know a new life in relation to sin as well. But what is more important is to know what happens if you do sin (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1-2): Jesus is your Advocate. He is our effective Advocate before the Father. He is effective because He is righteous. And because He is righteous what He did for you Christian was the perfect removal of the barrier between you and God! “Propitiation” means that your guilt and the attendant punishment has been completely banished through Christ’s perfect love for you (Bruce, 50). Propitiation means “both to quiet God’s anger AND to remove the guilt of

sin.” (Buls, 107) This is how you stand today. This is what the Risen Jesus has done for you. We must now live out His life because what He has done for us, was not just for us, but for the world (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:2).

Now what? How should we then live? Be salt, be light...don't go along with the acceptance of darkness; don't go along with the denial of sin, but live for your Advocate who has cleansed you of sin and whose removal of guilt and the wrath of God is not just for you, but for the world. Our hope and prayer is that this gift would not be rejected; but even more our life is to now confess God's view. It is a view that saves the world, saves the family, saves marriage, saves freedom...saves people, every one for whom the Lord spilled His blood and conquered death. Now what? Let us live!