**Believing, You Have Life**

**John 20:19-31**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you know that the Bible was recorded as God’s Word, written directly to you? Seriously! Weren’t you paying attention to the Gospel lesson? Let me read a portion of it to you again.

*Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

People have always commented that it is hard to believe that God is in charge and has control over everything. When asked to clarify their reasoning, they mention cancer, Parkinson, and other disease that cripple – and lately they have added Coronavirus. They will mention the cruelty that people perpetrate upon one another in stealing and murder, especially throwing in the killing of Christians by Muslims, or gunmen while they are in church. “If God is truly God, why does He permit such things to happen? Why doesn’t He save His people?” If such questions are raised by those who claim that they do not believe in God, they will ask such questions with a smug look on their face which almost declares, “So smarty-pants-believer, try and answer that question!”

If I am a participant in the conversation, I like to ask, “What are the wages of sin?” That often gets me a blank look. You know that the answer is, the wages of sin is death! That means that cancer and other dread diseases, including COVID-19, which may bring death, are all present in the world because of sinfulness. Each and every one of us will eventually end up in a grave because of sinfulness.

As for the cruelty of people toward others, what do you expect sinners, especially those who deny the existence of God, or who hate their own lives, to do to one another? Absolutely, they will be evil and cruel to one another.

Even God-fearing Christians are sinners. The best of people all have some dark secret, some sin that is hidden in their hearts, and hopefully from the rest of the world. It is true of you! Just as it is true of me. In our case though, as believers, we are repentant and remorseful over our sins. We also trust that in Christ our sins are forgiven, and as His Spirit fills us, we will and can do better.

And why do we do we trust in Christ? Because this text was written to you, *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

This simple statement in John’s Gospel is there by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. John was compelled to write these words, and in the Scripture, they apply to the entire Bible – not just to John’s Gospel.

Do you remember the words of Jesus when He was speaking to the Jews? They did not like Jesus. He healed on the Sabbath. He ate with sinners! He conversed with lowlifes! He spoke of forgiveness! But the Jews believed that it was in keeping the Law that you were made righteous before God, that you earned a place in God’s kingdom. They were of the opinion, that until the whole nation of Israel got it right, Christ would not return to make them a great nation again. They believed that the Scriptures were given by God as a guide book for holy living.

That was Jesus understands when He replies to their thinking, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” (Jn. 5:39-40) This comes across sounding like He is talking about the Old Testament, for at the time He spoke those words, that was the only Scripture available.

As we get to the point of our text for today, John makes the assertion: *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*. (vv.30-31) These are written – as Jesus proclaimed earlier in this Gospel – all of Scripture. All of Scripture includes everything inspired to be written by the Holy Spirit: Old Testament, as well as the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. No, all had not yet been recorded, as some would have pen put to parchment in the years following the writing of our text. But God knew what would be written – it is all His Word after all.

Christ is the center of all Scripture. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to the work of Christ. In fact, some of the most explicit details of what He endured on the cross in ***ALL*** of Scripture were written in Psalm twenty-two (one thousand years before Jesus was born) and in Isaiah chapters fifty-two and fifty-three (seven hundred years before Jesus was born).

All these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Christ. That name Christ is not like we think of a name. Christ is used interchangeably as Jesus’ first name or second name. It better with think of it instead, as a title – God’s Christ! God’s anointed One! God’s Messiah! The One promised long ago! The One first foretold to be the one to crush Satan’s head while Adam and Eve were still in the garden.

Christ is the Lamb of sacrifice that allows Abraham to take Isaac home alive.

Christ is the Lamb of sacrifice that is foretold in the Passover, whose blood marks the doors of our hearts so that death may pass over us and we might enter the promised land of eternal rest.

Christ is the One forsaken of God, so that you might never be forsaken.

Christ is the One whose hands and feet were pierced.

Christ is the One who was bruised for our iniquities, who was wounded for our transgressions, by whose stripes we are healed – for the chastisement for our peace fell upon Him.

Christ is the One who silently and willingly was led to the slaughter.

Christ makes the sacrifice, offering up His life unto death upon the cross to purchase for you, for me, and for all people, forgiveness of sins.

Christ was raised from the dead on the third day, by the glory of the Father. His resurrection declaring what Jesus proclaimed from the cross to be true – It is finished! All is accomplished! Sin’s ultimate victory, death, could not contain Him! He burst forth from those awful bonds!

Yes, it is true, vile, evil, wickedness is present and rampant in the world – and in the lives and actions of those who were created in the image of God. All because of sin!

Scripture declares however, with Christ’s precious blood dripping from every page, that He has won the victory over sin and death. His glorious resurrection declares that we too have that victory, as has been promised. All this is written that you may believe – and the believing you may have life in His name.

And what a joyous life it is!

Trials and tribulations may assail us,

coronavirus might exile us to our homes,

enemies may gloat over us,

and fear may loom as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

But Christ has won the victory and it is ours!

We walk each day with head held high knowing what comes on the last day – a day of resurrection joy when our bodies will be made like unto His glorious body. As such is true, how can we live in the darkness? How can we live in sin?

Walk in the light dear friends! Walk in the joy of your resurrection hope!! Walk in the glory that is yours in Christ Jesus!!! Walk in love toward God and in love toward your neighbor! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen [He is Risen indeed! Alleluia]