***Written That You May Believe***

**John 20:19-31**

*Quasimodogeniti – Easter 2*

*04.24.2022*

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

What is the purpose of the written Word of God, the Holy Scripture? It is amazing how many people believe that the Bible is nothing more than a recipe book for holy living. It is that belief which is most often misunderstood about the use of Scripture – and ultimately about Christianity.

And indeed, God’s Word does instruct in what is pleasing to God and what will incur God’s wrath. But is that the sole purpose of the Bible? Is it even the main purpose for which God inspired His holy prophets and apostles to record the things that have been handed down to us as holy writ?

Dear friends, the main purpose for Scripture is recorded for us in John’s Gospel lesson for today. *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.* (vv. 30-31)

You receive eternal life by faith in Jesus as God’s Christ. Jesus – is the name given the 2nd person of the Trinity, the eternal Word of God, as He took on human flesh.

Mary and Joseph did not pick out the name Jesus, it was given to them by God through angel. It means, God saves. Christ, is not a name, it is a title. It means Anointed One. While Jesus is not the first to be anointed, for many were anointed at God’s command for specific tasks, Jesus is the only one to bear the title of Christ, Messiah, Anointed One. Jesus, came as God’s Christ to accomplish a specific purpose – to be the propitiation for sin.

Christ is the second Adam, God in human flesh to win victory where the first Adam – and all Adam’s subsequent offspring fail – that is, in obedience to Torah. Adam had one rule from God, Thou shalt not eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden. On the mountain, God gave only ten commandments for holy living. But people, believing they can be in a right relationship with God by their own work, want more clarifying definitions of them. If they understand them better, then they can keep them.

Christ came to fulfill all that God commands – to be holy not only in all works, but also in all words and thoughts – He was obedient unto death, even death upon a cross. He sacrificed His holiness, to purchase our forgiveness that He might deliver to us His holiness.

People wanting a better definition of what adultery is, are not asking so that they can be more holy. They want to know the exact line they are not to cross is – so they can come to the very edge without sin. “Is pornography really adultery, it is not like I am touching or doing something with someone who is not my spouse.”

The lawyer who was told by Jesus that he had correctly defined the second table of the Law wanted a better recipe than that, so he asked Jesus, “who is my neighbor.” In other words, “which people do I ***HAVE*** to love?” He wanted to know, hoping for a limited list because there were some he hopes He does ***not* have** to love.

Let’s face it, when people want to know more about God’s will for holy living, they are trying to find out exactly how big the grey area is, what is OK to do without being guilty before God. How much can I get away with before I stir up God’s wrath?

People want to believe that it is not all black and white, that there is grey area. More importantly, that we can live in the grey area. The book is black on white, and it is very clear, no “interpretation” is truly necessary.

God has given exact recipes. He has answered all questions so that all are guilty and condemned according to the “recipe” for holy life. It goes like this, there is not a righteous man upon the earth who does good and never sins. (Eccl. 7:20) When called ‘good teacher’, Jesus asks, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” (Mk 10:18, Lk. 18:19)

People want to be responsible for their own place in God’s kingdom, they have to do their part. The majority of all people – Christians included – believe that Christianity is all about the does and don’ts, what we are to do and not do to be right with God. We need to get the recipe right.

So, do you want the Scriptures to give you more recipes, recipes you cannot keep? Or would you rather find God’s Christ in the Scriptures? Everything in the Bible points to Christ! Everything in Scripture is written for you – so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and that you might have life in His name.

It is what the Jews believed, it is part of the reason they despised Jesus. Jesus Himself declared to them, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.” (Jn. 5:39-40) He was saying, “You think that the Bible give you a recipe for earning heaven! You are unable to do so! No man can!”

You know who the Christ is, but what is the Christ? He is the One God anointed to suffer and die to pay for your sin. The Christ is anointed to rise again to declare sinners justified.

Thomas said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” It was like he was thinking, *I saw Him die on the cross, He was laid in the tomb. Do I want Him back? Yes! Do I want Him walking with us? Teaching us wonderful things? Breaking bread with us? Healing all who come to Him? Yes! Yes! Yes! And, yes! But He isn’t coming back, you do not get beaten bloody – the flesh flailed from your body – suffer the pain and agony of dying on the cross, as I saw happen, and then just rise again. It has never happened before, and it has not happened now*!

Eight days later the disciples were again locked away in that upper room, Thomas was with them, and Jesus came and stood among them. Now his eyes saw and his hand touched Jesus. Now it was true. Now he believed.

That is recorded for ***YOU***, the truth – the Christ died and rose again to save ***YOU***. In fact, Thomas and all the other disciples except John, suffered horrific deaths because they would not deny that truth. If they renounced what they confessed about Jesus, that He was God who died and rose again, they would not be killed. They all chose death rather than renounce Christ resurrected. Josephus, a Jewish historian, wrote about many Christians being martyred rather than deny their beliefs. Pliny, a Roman magistrate wrote to Trajan: *I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed.*

Threatened with death they would not denounce Christ! Why? Because they had been witnesses, they knew the truth. They knew that by faith in Christ, even if they died, they would also rise again as did He.

John’s writing of the Gospel comes as people were being put to death for the things they believed about Christ, so John writes, “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.”

Dear friends, these are written that ***you*** may believe – written that ***you*** might have testimony – written that ***you*** may turn from your dead works in repentance, and trust in something other than yourself. These are written that ***you*** might believe in Him who took ***your*** sins to the cross, buried them in His tomb, and rose to proclaim to you the new life ***you*** will have in Him. These are written that ***you*** might believe in Christ.

Our Epistle also speaks to us. *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* (vv.4-8)

Faith in Christ overcomes sin, the world, and death. The testimony of Christ builds such faith in you.

Christ comes to you by water. Baptism works faith in you.

Christ comes to you by His blood, applied in the Word of the absolution, and taken into your mouth in Christ’s supper, and works faith in you

The Spirit comes to you in the Word – testifying to the truth and works in you who hear that Word.

These all come to you that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is He who came to die upon a cross to purchase ***your*** forgiveness, who rose again to declare ***you*** justified, and who comes to you now to build ***you*** up in faith unto life everlasting.

You could search the Scripture for the recipe to keep God’s law better.

Or you can do as God requires look to the Scripture in order to find Christ, and then believe in the One to whom they point. And in repentance for the forgiveness of sin, trust the One who has done it all for you – believe in God’s Christ.

Dearly beloved of God, be blessed in believing. Amen.