"Did You See the Lord?"

John 20:19-20

11 April Anno Domini 1999
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

O Lord, our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter, as we come together to hear Your Word, we humbly pray that You may open our hearts to the preaching of Your Word, so that we may repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior. Hear us for His sake. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A month or so ago, during the Sunday School opening, I invited those children in attendance to step into the sacristy behind me and look at the sign fixed to the other side of the door. The sermon that day was titled by the same words, "Sir we wish to see Jesus." The reason that those words are on the other side of that door is this. Each time a pastor enters the sanctuary by passing through that door to lead the congregation in the Divine Service of Word and Sacrament, he reads those words and is reminded of the solemn task that he has. He is to tell the people of the Lord God about Jesus ... to let you see Jesus.

The sermon text for this morning is a portion of the Gospel Reading for today. The event takes place in the evening of that first Easter Sunday. Please listen to John 20:19-20 under the theme of ...

... Did You See the Lord?

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

The events, the eye-witness reports and the subsequent discussions of that Easter Day must have been re-lived, stated again and again, hashed over countless times and included the entire spectrum from oppressive unbelief to joyful faith. I mean, just imagine what could have occupied the dialoguing during those daylight hours: the earthquake as the women journeyed to the garden grave, the Easter angel at the tomb, the silent sepulchre empty except for the swaddling cloths, the trembling guards who became silent statues, the angelic announcement that the Lord had risen, Mary Magdelene's dash from the garden to the disciples with the report of the empty tomb and the Resurrection, the race of Peter and John to that cave, the two angels in the sepulchre who appeared to Mary after Peter and John had returned to their homes, the appearance of Jesus to Mary, her second trip to report to the disciples what she had seen and heard, their subsequent disbelief and disregard concerning her report, the amazing report of the late afternoon appearance of the risen Jesus to the Emmaus disciples, and above all, fear. The disciples were so afraid that what happened to Jesus might also happen to them that they went into hiding and locked the doors behind them.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. How did He do that? How did He get inside that place when the doors were locked? "Well," says human reason, "He used misdirection with a slight of hand in a sort of 'reverse Houdini' trick." No, that's quite silly. The Bible states it simply, *Jesus came and stood among them.* "Well," says the superstitious, "It was a ghost!" No, that's not the way it was. The Bible indicates that, Jesus *showed them His hands and His side.* "Well," says the science fiction enthusiast, "Scotty beamed Him down." The Scriptures indicate that *Jesus came and stood among them.* He had and has no need of anyone sending Him this place or that.

So, how did He do that? How did He get inside that place when the doors were locked? To help understand this question, please take a look at that insert that you have in your bulletins. It is from the *Formula of Concord* which is one of *The Lutheran Confessions.* Follow along as I read from it:

"Furthermore, the one body of Christ has three different modes, or all three modes, of being at any given place.

1. The comprehensible, corporeal mode of presence, as when He walked bodily on earth and vacated or occupied space according to His size. [This is the way you and I are. That is comprehensible -- in other words, you and I are able to understand how this takes place. Right now, in your corporeal mode of presence, you are occupying a space in your pew. After Jesus came and stood among them, He used this mode of presence." *See My hands and My feet, that it is I myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have (Luke 24:39).*]

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." Though you all left Me and fled into the darkness of night and transgression, I say to you, *Peace be with you.* Though you have doubted and disbelieved the Word concerning My Resurrection and deserve nothing except eternal death and destruction, I, Who crushed the head of Satan on your behalf, I say to you, *Peace be with you.* Though you have sinned against the Lord God Almighty in thought, word and deed, and have earned for yourself nothing except the Lake of Fire, I, Who endured the agonies of hell on account of your sins, I say to you, *Peace be with you.* Though you have nothing to say before the Bench on Judgment Day except, "Guilty," I, Who have paid the price of all your iniquities when I died for you on the cross, I say to you who occupy a pew at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Emmett, Idaho and who walk to and fro upon the face of this earth, I say to you, *Peace be with you.*

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. The Resurrected Jesus showed Himself to His disciples. The very Body that was broken on the cross for us now stands before them. Look at Him, dear disciples. *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* Behold those nail-pierced hands from which the very Blood of Jesus was shed for you for the remission of all your sins. *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* See the Savior's side where the Sacraments of the Church poured forth after the spear had pierced His Body. *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Dear disciples, take another look at the insert.

"2. There is, secondly, the incomprehensible, spiritual mode of presence according to which He neither occupies nor vacates space but penetrates every creature, wherever He wills. [This is incomprehensible which means we are not able to understand how or in what way He does this. He, in body and spirit, removes or manifests Himself in one place or another.] He employed this mode of

presence when He left the closed grave and came through locked doors, [as well as His being] in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper."

Do you understand the significance and miraculous nature of what this means? In the same way that Jesus left the tomb on Easter morning, and in the same way that Jesus came to the disciples behind locked doors on Easter evening, that is Jesus' same mode of presence in, with and under the bread and wine of the Holy Communion. Jesus said when He took the bread, *This is My Body given for you.* Jesus said when He took the wine, *This is My Blood shed for you for the remission of sins*. By the grace of God through faith in the Word, you are able to see Jesus' really present in the Lord's Supper. *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Take a look at that insert again.

"3. Thirdly, since He (Jesus) is one person with God, the Divine heavenly mode, according to which all creatures are indeed much more penetrable and present to Him than they are according to the second mode." Now that sounds pretty complicated, but what it means in simplest terms is this. Jesus is God and wherever God is Jesus is. Once again, that is not comprehensible or understandable to us. How this happens we do not know. But even if unknown to us, it is nevertheless true and we should be thankful for this mode of Christ's presence. So before Jesus ascended into heaven, He was not speaking figuratively, but quite literally when He said, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Therefore, be comforted with the truths that this Jesus, *who died, yes, who was raised from the dead,* is your High Priest Who, at every moment of your life, is at the right hand of God interceding for you (Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 7:25); that *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27);* that you and I have been permitted into the presence of the Lord as we gather in His Name to hear the Word; that you have received Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar; and that this Jesus Who has gone to prepare a place for you (John 14:3), is also with you always to the end of your days upon this earth. *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Now, dear people, we certainly do not wish to limit the Lord Jesus to these three modes of presence. Indeed, God may have more modes whereby Christ's body can be anywhere. But these are proclaimed to you in order that hearing such Word of God *you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have Life in His Name (John 20:31).*

Dear members of the Family of God at Our Redeemer, today a new sign has been added to the sacristy door. The one on the other side reads, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." As mentioned earlier, it is intended to be read by the pastor before he begins leading the congregation in the Divine Service The new sign, the one on this side of the door is intended to be read by the pastor as he leaves the sanctuary following the Divine Service. The words on the sign are: *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* Hopefully, he may say a silent, confident, "yes" as he reads it and leaves. If there ever comes a day when you do not see Jesus in this holy place, please let your pastor know, doing so for his sake and for your sake and for the sake of the children of the Church.

Once more, under the question of "Did you see the Lord?", please listen to the sermon text for the day ...

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.