

First Lutheran Church
Ft. Benton, MT
Peace Lutheran Church
Great Falls, MT
Christ for the Deaf
5 Easter A 2020

Newborn Easter People

I Peter 2:2-3, 9-10

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

The bishop of Rome has some very endearing, very kind words to say to you Lutherans occupying the pews of your home congregations. You are a holy priesthood, even though not everyone is a minister. Peter compares you to newborn babies, even though physically you may be long in the tooth. You are a chosen people, a people belonging to God, even though your sin tells a completely opposite story. Just what does the apostle intend to say by holy inspiration? Together as pastor and people we will venture in the next few moments together to yield heart, mind, and soul to the Holy Spirit's directing on this text via the theme: "Newborn Easter People."

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (NIV). A moderate chinook whisks across the straw-strewn yard. Momma stands on the leeward side of the wind-break, caressing her newborn calf with each drying lick of her tongue. The spindly calf makes persistent attempt one after the other to stand on its bent feet. Up and then down and then up again...predictably rising only to fall again as if attending a Lutheran Divine Service. I watch from a safe distance away this unrestrained will to live, wanting to cross the line and help the newborn get its bearings. No. I must not go there. Prayer alone is my helping hand in this hour of need. "Make haste, O Lord, to deliver me" I intercede for the newborn creation. "Make haste to help me, O Lord" is the supplication of a human mediator.

After about 20 minutes, the young one stands, but not steady. And instinctively the head pivots around to momma's waiting utter that produces therein the vital elixir of life. "How does it know?" I ponder. "From whence this great wisdom to suck from some anatomy which this black, hairy mass has never seen or known?" A true wonder in the making. Having laid hold and made the vital connection of life, my mission is complete. I can leave now, knowing mother and newborn are in the Lord's hands for good keeping (at least for the moment). That vital connection, being plugged in to the source of life flowing from the God-given well-spring and gift-bag of a mother is the subject of Peter's second chapter preface. Just like this newborn baby, wobbling and struggling after many months folded safely inside the womb, so are you and I in this strange world of "new normal." You may not know just how to act, what to say, whom

you may offend by going to far or not far enough in social distancing. You may well feel as I do sometimes in public...wobbling and struggling for the vital connection to a strange and new set of circumstances. But the Lord is here to deliver you and me. He is here, making haste to our prayers for the pure spiritual milk we crave.

You know the frailty of life, how one moment we can be healthy and strong and the next very ill and on death's doorstep. All the more reason why Peter's urging is not only to be heard, but heeded. Like newborn babies, exposed and in perpetual need of our mother church's nestled bosom, crave pure spiritual milk (which is the Word of Christ). By it you grow up and gain strength and stature in your salvation now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. The Lord's goodness is often taken for granted among us for it is hidden in the common feedings of life. There's nothing glorious or heroic about being awoken in the middle of the night to prep a bottle and feed your son or daughter, but you do it nevertheless because newborns crave it. There's nothing extraordinary about a pressed wafer of bread and sip of wine in and of themselves. Yet the Lord's goodness is manifest in the words He attaches to them and spiritual eating and drinking commanded us that forgiveness, life, and salvation may come to those born anew in water and Word.

In the frail reality of this life, a life that sometimes knocks us right off our feet and leaves us cold and wet, we have a very precious and often neglected gift in Christ our Lord. Peter may well have had the invitation of Isaiah in mind when he wrote the words of our text today. It is good to be reminded on this Mother's Day of God's grace and love for us even in these difficult times. "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isaiah 55:1). Peter's invitation wells forth from King David's inspired pen in Psalm 34:8: "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him."

You'll need to keep coming back, keep craving this pure spiritual milk even though you won't stay a newborn for long. Eventually cute, little calves get kicked out on grass and learn to drink water out of the trough. They venture off to find all sorts of edible delights in the world back behind the barn. You will be like them if you haven't become that way already in your spiritual life. All the world is not milk, even though for you all life is in and of Christ. Many a Christian has fallen prey to the craving of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil who seeks to poison the pure spiritual milk with his lies. Don't wean yourself from Word and Sacraments! Don't settle for taste-testing that relies on your own experiences, your own personal notions of spirituality, or your own self-help measures. Milk is the only way to go! Those other poor substitutes, wrapped in slick packages with fancy lettering will only serve to stunt your growth and leave you the runt of the herd. You don't want that! Grow up in your salvation tasting only of Christ who died and rose again for you.

The bishop of Rome has some very endearing and uplifting things to say to you, but you mustn't let those things go to your head. *"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness in His wonderful light"* (NIV). As such you have been culled out of this world for a unique purpose. You are called by God to serve Him and the neighbor in your vocations. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. And so you and I are called to honor, serve, and obey Christ in righteousness and purity forever. Of course, we crave to go another way and serve another god. Old Adam in us demands that we be on our own as a people belonging to no one. The royal priesthood usurps its authority and overrides the Office of the Holy Ministry in its demands to have its own way. A holy nation quickly disintegrates to all manner of lawless disobedience as it acclimates to a godless world. We live in the world even though we are not to be of it. His wonderful light shines in the darkness, but for all practical purposes the darkness seems to be winning the day. It overshadows us. We cannot seem to be able to cast it off. Isaiah preaches of our modern-day predicament when he says, "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples" (Isaiah 60:2a).

We are living in some strange times. Is the great end possibly near? Have we as a nation and a people perhaps gone to far, rounding the bend to the point of no return? Now is the time. Now is the day of our salvation. Crave pure spiritual milk today. Live as the chosen people you are by virtue of Holy Baptism. Be royal priests to one another in your prayers and sacrifices of service. This is good and pleases your Father in heaven. Declare the praises of Christ who has called you out of this present darkness by His bitter suffering and death. Remember that once you were not a people on account of your sin and unbelief. You were no people at all under your own impotent good works. Once you had not received mercy. You and I were void of Christ and cast into the abyss of hell's darkness. But now you are a people, and now you have received mercy since Christ has brought you out into His marvelous light. Live each day as if it were your last day on earth, or the last day for your neighbor. You belong to God. Everyone around you should recognize that in you.

Last week you were sheep listening to the voice of your Good Shepherd who gathers together His lambs grazing on green pastures and lying near still waters. This week you are newborn calves, newborn Easter people belonging to God by means of His calling you. What will become of us next week? Stay tuned. There's more to come as together we hear God's Word and crave pure spiritual milk so that by it we may grow up in salvation. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Thanks be to God. Amen.