

Easter 6 / May 5, 2024

1 John 5:7-8

“For there are three that testify: The Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”

The Spirit testifies to Christ in the water and the blood

The season of Easter commemorates Jesus' resurrection and the forty-day period during which He showed Himself alive to His disciples with many convincing proofs. The disciples experienced the resurrected Jesus in a way given only to them. They saw Jesus in the flesh, touched Him with their hands and heard His voice with their ears. At the beginning of this letter St. John wrote of Jesus saying, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life.”* John wrote his gospel as an eyewitness, saying, *“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us and we have seen His glory.”* They saw Jesus in the flesh. We see Jesus through the witness of the Spirit in the words of scripture, in the water of baptism and in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

Jesus is the Word of Life in the nature of His being. Begotten of the Father, He is God from eternity in union with the Holy Spirit. He is the creative force by whom all things come into being. In Him all things are held in existence; live, move and have their being. Jesus is the Word of Life as our God and Saviour. In Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell so that through Him, He would reconcile all things to Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross. He has the words of eternal life. All who hear His call are cleansed of sin in the shedding of His blood. All who hear His call receive the renewal of the Holy Spirit in the water of baptism. In the water and in the blood, the Spirit testifies to Christ our Saviour. All who receive Him in faith have life with God in time and for eternity.

John, the apostles and their fellow disciples who followed Jesus during His earthly ministry, were eye witnesses to His resurrection. They experienced Him directly with their senses. We experience Jesus through the Spirit, by the witness of word, in the water and the blood. After His ascension, those who saw Jesus with their eyes, heard Him with their ears and touched Him with their hands, experienced Him through the Spirit by the word, in the water and in the blood. The Word of life which John and the others saw, touched and heard, was accessible to them as to us through faith inspired by the Holy Spirit in the words of scripture, the water of Holy Baptism and in the bread and wine of Christ's Holy Supper. These three; the Spirit, the water and the blood are Jesus' witnesses. They testify that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; especially of those who believe. They call us to believe in His Name. They tell us that all who believe, receive the washing of the word in baptism and eat of His body and blood in His Holy Supper, have eternal life. These three agree and bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Saviour.

The first members of the church were blessed to see Jesus risen in His body. Their eyes were blessed to see, but Jesus said, *“More blessed are those who have not seen me, yet have believed.”* The Spirit shows us Jesus in the word, the water and the blood. As the summation of his gospel, John said, *“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that believing, you may have life in His name.”* We have life in Jesus through believing in His name. We receive this life through the witness of the Spirit in the word, by which the Spirit creates faith in our hearts. This life comes to us through the water of Holy Baptism, in which we receive the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit. This life comes to us in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, through which we receive the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sin. In the word, the water and the blood, the Spirit testifies to us of Jesus our crucified and risen Saviour, so we may believe and have life in His Name.

There is no force more creative than God's word. In the creation, God speaks His word and all things come into being, immediately and without opposition. There are no opposing forces as in other creation stories from the ancient near east. When God speaks it is done. His word is the force by which all things were created. His word is the power by which all things are held in being. His word is not an impersonal force. His Word is Jesus the Son of God, our Saviour. Jesus is the creative Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God clothed in human flesh. When Jesus spoke, storms were stilled, the wind quieted, the sea became calm. Who but God can control the sea with a word! Jesus is the eternally begotten Word of God. The Spirit leads us to the Word. The words of the Spirit spoken by the prophets lead us to Jesus. The Spirit opens our ears to listen to the Word. The Spirit opens our

hearts to receive the Word as our God and Saviour. Jesus has the words of eternal life. Jesus is the Word of life. Jesus comes to us by the working of the Spirit in the Word, in the water and in the blood.

There is nothing freer than the wind. Water can be dammed and stored in reservoirs, blood can be banked, but the wind is forever free. Spirit, breath and wind are the same word in the scriptures. Even as no one can tame, capture and control the wind, so the Spirit of God is above our comprehension and beyond our control. The wind blows where it will. The Spirit works when and where He wills. At the beginning of creation, the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep, lovingly like a parent gazing at a newly born child. In the creation of humans, God breathed His Spirit into the man and he became a living being. When God takes away His Spirit, created beings die. When He sends forth His Spirit, the earth and its creatures are renewed. The Spirit breathes the breath of life. The Spirit is the breath of life. *Jesus' words are Spirit and life.* The Spirit testifies to Jesus and gives life in Him through the word, in the water and in blood.

There is nothing more creative than the word. There is nothing more uncontrollable than the wind. There is nothing more powerful than water. We can tame water to a certain extent to supply our needs. We can dam it and regulate its flow for electricity and irrigation. We can store it in reservoirs to ensure a steady supply of drinking water. But when the water wants to go, it goes. When the water wants to go, there's not a dam in the world that can hold it back or a reservoir big enough to hold it in. Water washes away everything in its path. Water drowns. Water gives life.

Through water the Lord drowned a sinful world and the army of Pharaoh. Through water the Lord preserved the life of Noah and his family and made a new beginning. Through water the Lord rescued Israel from a land of slavery and death. Jesus showed He is God by calming the sea with a word and walking on its waves. In the water of Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit drowns our sinful nature, washes away our sins and gives us newness of life in Christ. In the water of Holy Baptism, the Spirit gives us a share in the death and resurrection of Christ. In the water of baptism, the Holy Spirit testifies to the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, by which our sins are washed away and our souls are covered over in Jesus' righteousness.

There is nothing more creative than the Word. There is nothing freer than the Spirit. There is nothing more powerful than water. There is nothing more life sustaining than blood. Blood carries oxygen, water and nutrients throughout our bodies. Blood cleanses our bodies of toxins, moving them through the kidneys and liver and out of the body. No blood, no oxygen, no breath, no life. Blood enriched with oxygen and nutrients gives life, stimulates growth and produces vitality. There is nothing more life giving than the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus gives life in relationship to God through the forgiveness of sin. The blood of Jesus, transfused into our spirits by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the word, the washing of baptism and the bread and wine of Holy Communion, nourishes our faith and cleanses us of sin, so that we may have life with God in time and for eternity.

These three; the Spirit, the water and the blood, testify that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ who has come for our salvation. These three; the Spirit, the water and the blood, open our hearts to receive Jesus as our God and Saviour. These three; the Spirit, the water and the blood, witness that Jesus died for our sins, rose for our salvation and gives forgiveness in time and life in eternity to all who believe in Him as their God and Saviour. These three; the Spirit, the water and the blood, agree that all who believe in their hearts and confess with their lips that Jesus Christ is Lord, have eternal life. *"There are three that testify: The Spirit and the water and the blood."* God bless us always to receive their witness in faith until faith passes into sight in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In His Name. Amen