

WVPC
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Quasimodo Sunday

2017-04-23

Scripture Reading

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2 Therefore, get rid of all ill will and all deceit, pretense, envy, and slander. ² Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, ³ since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

1 Peter 2:1–3 (CEB)

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Introduction

- This is the first Sunday after Easter. This Sunday has a couple of names.
 - The Church calls it St. Thomas Sunday (especially among Eastern Christians). It is called St. Thomas Sunday because in the Gospel of John, Thomas was absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples but he was present a week later in John 20:26 ,
 - It is also called Low Sunday because being the Octave Day of Easter, it was considered part of that feast, though in a lower degree and
 - it is also called Quasimodo Sunday.
- Yes, for those fans of the (1831) book by Victor Hugo titled *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, I did say Quasimodo.
- If you are not familiar with the story, the Hunchback of Notre Dame is about a hunchback, a person with a deformed back and other deformities who is the bell ringer at the Cathedral Notre Dame in Paris France in 1482.
- The novel has been made into several movies.

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- I best remember Charles (law-ton's) Laughton's portrayal of Quasimodo in the 1939 film.

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- For those of you with kids or grandkids you may be more familiar with the 1996 Disney Quasimodo
- In either case, in the story Quasimodo is an orphan who has found refuge and a purpose in the Church of Notre-Dame.
- He is named Quasimodo because as a baby he “was found abandoned on the doorsteps of Notre Dame Cathedral on the Sunday after Easter (in) ... 1467.”¹
- Now, the Catholic Church does not name things after secular fictional characters. The Sunday after Easter is called Quasimodo Sunday because of the first words of the opening song traditionally sung on this Sunday at the time.

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Ua-si modo * gé- ni-ti infántes, alle- lú- ia :

Like new-born babes, alleluia

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- This is Gregorian chant, which was widely used before we used organs/instruments in worship.
 - It is from Liber Usualis, a book of Gregorian chants that may have originated as early as the 11th century (1,000 years ago).²
 - We can pick out that the opening words are "Quasi modo geniti infantes alleluia."
- Here it is: (invite Kelly up). We do not hear much Gregorian chant today. I've asked Kelly up so that we can get a flavor of what this sounds like...
 - ...
- Thank you Kelly.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octave_of_Easter

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liber_Usualis

- The translation of the Latin words.
 - "Like new-born babes, alleluia"³
- It is based upon v. 2 of our reading for today which says "like a newborn baby"
- Quasimodo gets his name from the first two words of the chant

The Lord is Good

- Here is our reading again.

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- My plan this morning is to walk through this passage and pull out what it says to each of us, especially on the Sunday after Easter.
- I want to start at V. 3 which says "since you have tasted that the Lord is good."
- In the context of the Sunday after Easter, what does this reading say to us?
- On Easter, we tasted that the Lord is good, didn't we.
- On Easter Jesus conquered death and rose again from the grave.
 - Jesus subjected Himself to death
 - Because of His love for us.
 - To atone for our sins.
 - If we follow Jesus, we have victory over sin with Him.
 - We have our salvation, our life with God for eternity
- Paul tell us and the believers in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:55

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55 "Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

1 Corinthians 15:55

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³ [http://www0.cpld.org/wiki/index.php/Quasi_modo_geniti_infantes_\(Heinrich_Isaac\)](http://www0.cpld.org/wiki/index.php/Quasi_modo_geniti_infantes_(Heinrich_Isaac))

- Paul says this because death is not victorious over Jesus: He rose from the grave on Easter morning.
- All that this world has to offer us is eventual death. Some explain it as part of the natural process.
 - But through Jesus we, His people, have tasted victory over death and have eternal life.
 - Death may be natural but we do not need to settle for it.
 - We have been delivered from the power of the grave.
- This is good.
- This is hope.
- This is what anyone who has experienced it desires for themselves.

Like a newborn baby

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- Peter says that we have tasted this victory but he says
 - that we are like newborn babies – “Quasi modo GE-ni-ti”
- Newborns have a lot to learn don’t they. They crave learning. They are little learning machines.
 - They learn how to smile.
 - They learn how to walk.
 - They learn how to talk.
- After these basics, what they learn determines who they are when they grow up.
 - If they learn evil, they will tend to do evil things when they grow up
 - If they learn good, they will in turn tend to be good when they mature
- But at first all they know is to desire or crave milk.
- The first part of v. 2 is gets various translations in different bibles. When we see a word or phrase being translated different, it bears a closer examination.

- I've used the Common English Bible translation today which says "Desire" – the NIV uses the word "Crave".
 - The Greek word used in the original text is (epi-po-FAA-oh) ἐπιποθέω
 - Means to long for, desire, with implication of need, (BDAG)
- We should desire of the milk of the word.
 - What the CEB calls "milk of the word." The NIV calls this "spiritual milk", but
 - The Greek word here (λογικός (*lo-gi-KOS*)) is not derived from the Greek word usually used for "spirit" but from λόγος (*logos - word*).
 - As an adjective it means "reasonable" "rightly ordered."
 - Literally v.2 reads in the Greek the "reasonable, unadulterated milk you all long for"
 - To express this in proper English it could also be:
 - *the word of God,*
 - *milk of the word,*
 - *milk to be found in the word;*
 - I kind of like "the milk which nourishes the soul"⁴
- This milk should be pure milk, unadulterated by men, who can corrupt the word of God.
- We get this milk, this spiritual understanding from Jesus—His word, His example, His truth, the grace that He offers us through the Holy Spirit.
- Theologian JI Packer writes;

"Spiritual understanding—that is,
the discernment of the reality of God,
his ways with humankind,
his present will, and
one's own relationship to him now and for the future—
will not however reach us from the text
until the veil is removed from our hearts and
we are able to share the writer's own passion
to know and please and honor God."⁵
- This is what it is to desire the pure milk which nourishes the soul.

⁴ Joseph Henry Thayer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*](#) (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 379.

⁵ J. I. Packer, [*Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).

Born Again

- So we need to ask ourselves, how old are we spiritually?
- Just a few sentences before our passage for today, Peter has said that we have been born again.

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²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 (NIV)

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- In this respect, we are all infants.
- We need to continue to grow in this regard, all of our Christian lives.
- Thanks to Jesus Christ, and the events that we celebrated on Easter, our born-again self has seen and tasted the good, sweet, “milk which nourishes the soul”.

Hunchback of Notre-Dame example

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- In the story of The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, there is a similar event to what Peter is speaking of.
- In the story, “Quasimodo is sentenced to be flogged on the pillory and left there for an hour's public exposure.
 - He calls for water.
 - Esmeralda, a young women, seeing his thirst, approaches the public stocks and offers him a drink of water.
 - This act of kindness quenches his thirst and captures his heart.”⁶
- Later, this taste of kindness drives him to act. It was that taste of goodness that changed him.
- It is the taste of Easter that changes us.
- Like Quasimodo, we should crave more of it.
- Where Quasimodo desired more of the kindness shown to him,

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunchback_of_Notre-Dame

- we should desire more of the loving God shown to us at Easter.
- To pursue this Peter tells us in chapter 1 that we should (1 Peter 1:3–9, 13–22)
 - Be genuine in our faith and love Jesus - 1 Peter 1:7-8
 - Be holy in all we do (1 Peter 1:14).
 - Keep God’s commandments,
 - love one another (1 Peter 1:22), and
 - be an example by our behavior (1 Peter 1:15).
 - Lastly, we should not have any false idols but worship God alone (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Baggage to get rid of

- Unlike a new born infant, we come with some baggage when we are born again. We have the habits of this world that we have picked up along the way.
- That is why we must shed our old habits so that we can learn again, as a newborn baby learns.

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- In v. 1 Peter says “Therefore, get rid of all ill will and all deceit, pretense, envy, and slander.”
- The Greek word translate Rid - ἀποτίθημι – (appo-TEE-tha-me) also gets various translations.
- The Greek word used here means *take off in the Greek – and lay aside, rid oneself*. (a) It can refer literally to taking off your clothes⁷
- We must discard the things which hinder our spiritual growth.
 1. Ill will or *Malice*, which is more generally all sorts of wickedness,
 2. Deceit in words or actions—flattery, falsehood, and delusion.
 3. Pretense or *Hypocrisy* that counterfeits piety or friendship
 4. *Envy which* grieves at the good of another—their talents, prosperity, or accomplishments.

⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 123.

5. Slander or *Evil speaking*, speaking against another.
- Compare these things with what we just saw Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, demonstrate in Matthew 26:
 - Ill will: in Judas' case this showed itself as greed and uncaring about Jesus' safety:
 - ““What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” he asks of the chief priests in v.15.
 - Deceit in words:
 - Judas said in v. 25 “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” after Jesus announced that one of people eating at the last supper would betray Him.
 - *Pretense or Hypocrisy*
 - In vv. 48–49 we see Judas kissing Jesus in hypocrisy:

⁴⁸ Now the betrayer(Judas) had arranged a signal with the mob from the chief priests: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.”

Our need to leave behind

- One could say that I’m not an evil person, I have nothing to leave behind. I’m a good person.
- We should not forget Peter, Jesus’ disciple, and his words on Mandy Thursday.
- At the last Supper Jesus predicts that Peter would deny Jesus three times (Matthew 26:34).
- Peter,
 - like anyone who would deny that they don’t need to leave anything behind,
 - says that he would never betray Jesus.
- Later in Matthew 26, we see Peter in his weakness when he realizes that he has in fact denied Jesus three times when he hears the cock’s crows (Matthew 26:69–75).
- Jesus knows that we must all take off our bad habits, and leave them behind with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- This is one very important thing we must do to pursue the “milk which nourishes the soul.”

Grow into our salvation

- Let's look at v. 2.

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- If we have shed all of this baggage we can more readily be nourished by “this milk”, which aids us to grow up in our salvation.
- This is the core of Peter's desire for us—our salvation.
 - It is the object of our desires.
 - It is the reason we strip ourselves of our old habits.
 - It is the result of being born again.
- This is the reaction that we should have after Easter.
 - God is Good.
 - Jesus arose for us, conquered death and overcame sin.
 - We see things differently now through our faith in Him
 - Let us desire what Jesus offers – our salvation.
- Desire is too weak of a word.
 - Crave is a stronger word. We should crave the milk of the Word
- Crave is too weak of a word
 - Dedicate is a stronger word. It implies that not only is there intense desire but we take some steps towards being nourished by the pure word of God.
- Dedicate is not strong enough of a word
 - Language fails me.
 - Perhaps devote or commit or “risk it all” or “single mindedly pursue”
 - We must be all in, “bet all of our chips” as if we were in a game of poker
 - We should hold nothing back in our efforts towards being nourished by the pure word of God.
- The fact of Easter, that Christ rose again gives us a taste of our salvation and we should pursue our salvation today and for the rest of our days.
- To do this, Peter reminds us what we must do in chapter 3 [read].

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“Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep their tongue from evil
and their lips from deceitful speech.
11 They must turn from evil and do good;
they must seek peace and pursue it.
12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer..”
1 Peter 3:10–12 (NIV)

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- We learn how to do this by worshiping God, reading the Bible, obeying God’s commandments, and through fellowship with one another.
- God’s spirit guides us as we grow spiritually.
- Listen to the Spirit now.
 - What has the Spirit been telling you this week?
 - What has the Spirit told you in this service?
 - Is it to rid yourself of a bad habit?
 - Is it to keep your tongue from evil?
 - Is it to seek God and not your own idols?
- I’m going to pause here for a moment for you to listen to the Spirit.
- Dear Jesus, we want to listen to what we need to do to pursue you...

[[Pause for 30 seconds.]]

Closing prayer

- Join me in prayer.
- Dear Jesus,
- You willingly died for our sins.
- You paid the price for our ill will, deceit, pretense, envy, and slander.
- You give us a fresh start and we are born again in our faith.
- Thank you for this precious gift which we do not deserve but which is ours through Your mercy.
- Let us drink in the milk of your word,
- Which nourishes us so that we may grow up into our salvation.

- Help us to commit ourselves to you and to risk everything we have in the pursuit of Your good word.
- We ask this in Your precious name.
- Amen.