

SERMON AT THE CLOSE OF THE LCSA SYNOD 2012

CHRIST CHURCH: KIRCHDORF (REVELATION 1:4-8)

Dear friends of our Lord Jesus Christ – brothers and sisters in the Lutheran Church + Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. He who rose victoriously on the 3rd day and ascended into heaven to the right hand of God keeping all authority, power and might in his hand to judge, rule and reign over the quick and the dead. Whose kingdom has no end – and that's truly more than any wishful thinking of this or that political fantasizing to rule until the end of time. No – this status of everlasting, eternal, endless and perpetual reign and glorious rule and power is our Lord Jesus Christ's sole prerogative and exclusive domain: *Solus Christus* + Only Christ +

It is he – this Lord Jesus Christ – praise his name, who's enthroned on high – even higher than on the haggard cross! Laud and magnify him! Fall down on your knees and worship him. He hears your prayers, your petitions and calls in good and in bad times. Keep eyes, ears and all your senses focused on him – even your mind, heart and soul with all their powers and strengths. He is worthy of all praises, all adoration and glory, all reverence and veneration, all respect, adulation and exultation in heaven and on earth. Just like his apostle St. Paul admonishes: *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* (1.Cor.2:2) and just as our father and bishop emeritus confess: *Jesus Christus mihi omnia!* (To me Jesus Christ is everything) – all else is just sinking sand, vain, fleeting fancies and passing by like the flower in the field and the grass in the pasture.

It is he – IX – who loves us – even before we were born und long before we knew him – he, who has freed us from our sins by his precious blood – when he died for us on the cross of Golgotha, shedding his blood without selfish protest or sinful rebellion when whipped by cruel tormentors and castigators, but rather was silent like a lamb led to the slaughter, he willingly, patiently suffered great pain and shame, voluntarily shedding his blood when crowned with piercing thorns, when struck in the face by angry fists and fierce knuckle dusters, he, when dead was punctured and sliced open with a *mkonda* like a tin-opener to shed floods of baptismal graces, washing away the sins of the world, cleansing us of

otherwise irremovable stains, healing injuries and overcoming worst evil by granting blessed forgiveness, holy salvation, eternal life and pouring forth the sacramental fountain sharing celestial drink, serving divine sustenance and dishing out healing and invigorating medicine against the most vicious sin, old death and the exhausted devil.

Look up and see – he is coming again to judge the living and the dead. It is him, who was dead and behold he is alive – o miracle and wonder – He lives and reigns, yesterday, today and tomorrow: *Alpha and Omega* + That is the strong comfort in Advent with great expectations of him to come for you too. See, this Lord and King is yours with all his grace and mercy, with all his goodness and love, with all his divine power and authority to forgive your sins, to strengthen your faith + to keep you in his peace now + forever.

The apostle St. John encourages the Church, all 7 congregations, all dioceses, districts and continents of the one, holy Christian Church while in exile on the Island Patmos (cf Robben Island or Alcatraz). He encourages all of us, who are members of this Church by grace through faith in our Lord IX to look up and face forward towards him our returning redeemer IX. The apostle knows, that we have more than enough reason to mourn, cry, wail and lament at the sight of Jesus Christ – even to flee him and run away from him and shun his presence – he the holy, perfect, immaculate, faultless and unblemished punished, pierced and crucified, because all of his suffering, discrimination, hurting pain, isolation, neglect and sorrowful death was because of us. It is our fault. We are guilty and most worthy of severe punishment and harshest retribution by the living God, deserving the most rigorous sentence by the righteous supreme judge, he the final executor of divine justice: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I did not love, trust and fear him more and above all things! Did you? Its easy to fool oneself in this regard. Therefore look up and see there – the crucified. He hangs there because of you too. It's you and me, who are the cause of that – you should be hanging there and me too – nobody else we can lay the blame on or point fingers at – it's me, me and my sin, my sin, my own most grievous sin and as the sun hid its face at the sight of this terrible ordeal – we too should sink in shame and hide ourselves. But there is nowhere to run, really, there is nowhere to hide as the Psalmist laments before God:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide

me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (Ps.139:7-12)

That's the reason, why our soul is restless in us – constantly unsettled, on the move – until it finds rest and peace with God. There is no other place of rest, no place of peace or restitution – no *Enhlanhleni*, no *Welbedacht* or *Lekkerrus* – but in the presence of the living God as the prophet Hosea writes:

Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. (Hos 6:1-3)

He has already accomplished that heavenly rest – perfectly fulfilled and accomplished. Just as he promised his faithful servant and prophet Isaiah, who describes the passion, death and dying of our Lord Jesus Christ – the true suffering servant and perfectly obedient son of God and deliverer of mankind, the promised Messiah and the savior of the world:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Is 53:4-6)

Thank him and sing his praises – for he God of Gods, king of kings and our God alone – he is alive, most vigorous and burning with fervor to forgive all our sin and iniquity, restore and cure all our hurt and pain and to bring us to his final rest. He surely does not deal with us as we deserve it, but rather rewards us undeservingly with gracious love and endless mercy as the Psalmist teaches us to confess:

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children-- with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. (Ps 103:8-18)

It is he our God, the Lord Zebaoth, the Lord of hosts and grand master of angels and archangels, IX – who with the father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever – he alone it is who...

makes me down to lie on pastures green, he leadeth me the quiet waters by. My soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness, even for his own name's sake. Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear no ill; for thou art with me, and Thy rod and staff me comfort still. My table thou has furnished in presence of my foes; my head thou dost with oil anoint, and my cup overflows. Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me; and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be. (LSB 710)

That is why my dearly beloved in Christ, you his beloved friends and members of his most cherished prize – his saintly, immaculate bride, the one and only holy Christian Church elected, chosen, called to be his very own precious treasure we wipe off all tears, blow our noses, pitch our ears to hear his gospel, sharpen our eyes on the look-out for him, loosen our tongues to praise his name, bear his witness and pronounce his good and gracious will to sinners in need – like our neighbor or the one fallen by the wayside and victim to robbers or lost and far away from home. Careful and attentive and diligent to carry out his bidding, reaching out to each other caringly, merciful and innovative in good works, bearing each others burdens, lifting up our faces, picking up hope, taking courage and looking forward to him, who is coming to fulfill his mission and divine work perfectly and for us and our salvation. He – our sweet chariot – coming to save, redeem, restore, heal, perfect and carry us home – singing all the way: *“Swing low sweet chariot, he’s coming to carry me home...”* Amen.

*Swing low, sweet chariot Coming for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot, Coming for to carry me home.*

*I looked over Jordan, and what did I see Coming for to
carry me home? A band of angels coming after me,
Coming for to carry me home.*

*Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm down, (Coming for
to carry me home) But still my soul feels heavenly bound.
(Coming for to carry me home)*

*The brightest day that I can say, (Coming for to carry me
home) When Jesus washed my sins away. (Coming for to
carry me home)*

*If you get there before I do, (Coming for to carry me
home) Tell all my friends I'm coming too. (Coming for to
carry me home)*