**1 Peter 1:17-25 (ESV)**

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. [20] He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, [21] who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. [22] Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

**“Just Face It”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. To honor Mother’s Day is finally to value the gift of life. God continues to work in His creation to give good things. Certainly, the greatest thing in terms of this life is the life we have just to exist. Of course, the value of a mother is more than having to bear our biological creation. All mothers, even those who have adopted children, share in the harder task of having to raise us. Dad may be the head of the household, but God intimately gave mothers the task of nurturing our life. It affects the deepest levels of who we are. As one of our nation’s greatest leaders, Abraham Lincoln, once remarked, “I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

As much as we honor mothers in view of the fourth commandment and its blessings. The first three commandments also call our attention on Mother’s Day to the Church. She is the bride of Christ brought forth by His glory won at the cross. Out of Jesus’ death and resurrection, birth and life now abound in the Church by Word and Sacrament. What John the baptizer preached, what Jesus preached, is what the apostles preached,

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

This promise of birth and life by the Gospel makes the Church special because Christ is her glory. Being nurtured in Jesus’ victory over the cross and grave directs the baptized to fear, love and trust in God above all things.

“And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile…” The apostle Peter wrote to churches scattered throughout Roman lands. These baptized were constantly in danger of losing or replacing the Gospel. The command to “conduct yourselves with fear” was to humble and give hope. Fear is more than being afraid. It also means respect or reverence. In other words, some respected the authority of Caesar as God, others revered the glory of Rome, and anyone would was afraid of persecution. For all the things to fear, the baptized were to fear God alone. It was not fear as in terror, but a repentant faith based on the Father giving His Son for the sins of the World. As St. Peter said, “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. “

There are many fears today and yet Christ has conquered sin, death, the devil and even the Law. Since schools have now become the center of most communities. It is not surprising to find them trying to help promote family values. Regrettably, the best they can do is place faith/spirituality alongside numerous other values. Christ however has risen above being put into a category. He has claimed His rightful place as savior and Lord by His sacrifice. To fear Him alone comes from His great love for saving sinners. St. Paul states we “…are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus…” (Romans 3:24). Even the risen Jesus did not terrorize his disciples but taught them on the road to Emmaus. Family values are nothing compared to the value of Christ’s forgiveness for family. As the Psalmist declares, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11). This respect and awe for Christ flows out from His Church. By Word and Sacrament God rescues us from our futile ways to believe in the faithfulness of Jesus. He forgives sins, values life, and promises salvation is secure by His sacrifice.

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart…” As justification in Jesus as Savior is for the soul to believe, so upon the sinful heart is where God loves to work. Both the heart and soul are unseen, but not the Word nor the body of any person. Baptism is how God brings the visible and invisible together to be one saving act. Those Jews cut to the heart for crucifying God’s Son were to receive the Gospel by means of Water and the Word. It is also, where the apostle Peter later incites the churches to acts of love saying, “…You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God…” As selfish love dies in baptism by water so another kind of love arises to life by the Word. This brotherly fellowship between the baptized is what the world cannot copy because it will not submit to the love of Christ. It is an identity of love with the same Spirit of self-sacrifice just as our savior.

We are going to need this kind of love in the church today. The May issue of the Lutheran Witness is a special one. Everyone will be able to read about the current state of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It might be shocking to some, but need not be hopeless to any. A single church or church body is a gift of the Gospel. Christ lays the foundation by His faithful teaching and love of forgiving sinners. However, it is in the life of the redeemed where His love keeps changing our hearts all the time. As Rev. President Matt Harrison has stated,

“One-man shows’ may produce interesting, even spectacular, results, but over time they will fail because it takes a community to sustain the Church’s Work of mercy. Mercy takes people.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Whether it is a Lutheran church out in the country or the whole synod, it is everyone or no one. It is one Spirit of sacrifice or a spirit of selfishness. To be half-hearted means a need to return to where God loves us. His Word will not mislead or disappoint us for the disciples declared, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

St. Peter knew the changing world of the Roman society. It was unstable, chaotic and finally the Devil’s delusion. The churches scattered throughout the land had to trust in the promising Word of God. “And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” There would be Law to condemn sinners, but there would be Gospel to give faith and hope in Christ. As Martin Luther states about this preaching of God’s Word in the Church,

“Thus, when I hear that Jesus Christ died, took away my sin, gained heaven for me, and gave me all that He has, I am hearing the Gospel. The Word is soon gone when it is preached; but when it falls into the heart and is grasped by faith, it can never slip away. No creature can invalidate this truth. The depths of hell can do nothing against it; and even if I am already in the jaws of the devil, I must come out and remain where the Word remains... [[3]](#footnote-3)

The world continues to change, but it still mulls around in the same sinful corruption. Now it just happens to be with flashing lights and motorized gizmos. Yet, God’s mission is always to save. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). The highest value is His preached Word and Sacraments. This has been and will be the work of the Church until Christ’s return. Being nurtured in Jesus’ victory over the cross and grave grants the baptized to fear, love and trust in God above all things. Amen. Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia, Amen.

1. http://www.mothersdaycelebration.com/fifty-inspirational-quotes.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Christ Have Mercy, 187 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luther, M. (1999, c1967). *Vol. 30*: *Luther's works, vol. 30 : The Catholic Epistles* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (1 Pe 2:1). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)