

Jubilate
John 16:16-22

Jesus says in Matthew 18: “For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.” (18:20) Jesus is primarily talking about the Divine Service, although that’s not all He’s talking about. Because we are here at Grace gathered in the name of our Lord Jesus, we know that He is here in person. Wherever He is in His divinity, He is also there in His humanity because they cannot be separated. We know that Jesus is here, but we cannot sense Him with our five senses.

You cannot see Jesus. You see me acting in His stead and by His command, but I don’t look like Jesus. I preach and hand out the Lord’s Supper with my hands in the stead and by the command of Jesus, but you don’t see His hands with your eyes. There’s been many depictions of Jesus in paintings and there’s a lot of difference. They didn’t have polaroid cameras in Jerusalem during Jesus’ ministry, so we don’t know exactly what He looks like. We might conjecture that He looked like most Jews of His day, but we just don’t know for sure what that actually means. You haven’t seen Jesus with your eyes.

You cannot hear Jesus’ voice with your ears. You hear me preaching in His stead and by His command. You hear each other’s voices when you recite the liturgy. It is certainly the voice of Jesus in the preaching and liturgy, but it isn’t His personal voice that we hear with our ears. They didn’t have audio recorders back during His ministry either. Wouldn’t you love to hear Jesus’ voice as you read the Gospels. Especially when He’s talking to Peter. I imagine there was consternation in Jesus’ voice from time to time as He’s rebuking Peter.

You cannot touch Jesus with your hands. You feel my hand or the hand of a dear brother or sister in Christ, and that is definitely the touch of Jesus. But you don’t feel Jesus’ touch like when He held and blessed the children. You don’t feel His cloak like the woman with the blood flow problem.

You cannot cling to Jesus like Mary Magdalene in the garden where His tomb was.

You don't smell Jesus. Everyone has a smell. Sometimes pleasant, and sometimes not. I wonder what Jesus smelled like when the woman shed tears on Him and cleaned His feet and anointed Him with expensive perfume.

You cannot taste the water turned into wine, which I'm sure was the best tasting wine the world has ever known. Even if you're not a wine person, I'm sure this would have tasted better than any drink you've ever tasted.

Jesus isn't available to you in your five senses. Yet we know that Jesus is here with us this morning. In person. The only way to grasp Jesus is through His Word, by faith, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You get to know Jesus just like you get to know dear family and friends. You get to know your family and friends by spending time with them and listening to them. And you do this during good times and bad times. Through exciting times and boring times. Through celebrations and tragedies. The more time you spend with loved ones, and the more time they spend with you, the better you get to know one another.

It's the same way with Jesus. But the way you spend time with Jesus is a little different. Jesus is known through His Word. Both His written Word and His visible Word of water, bread, and wine. When Jesus is speaking to the Jews who want to kill them, He says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life." (John 5:39-40) The Bible reveals Jesus, and it is in Him that you have life. Jesus doesn't speak to you apart from the Scriptures, but there He does speak to you. Getting to know Jesus by getting to know the Scriptures gives you Jesus Himself. And with Jesus comes life, eternal life. He also reveals Himself in His visible Word, the Sacraments.

When Jesus is talking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they don't recognize Him until they have the Lord's Supper. As Luke testifies, "When He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him." (Lk 24:30-31) If this isn't the Lord's Supper, then I don't know what it is. But I'm pretty sure I know the Lord's Supper when I hear it and see it.

This recognition of Jesus comes through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. As you already know, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb 11:1) And as you also already know, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." (Rom 10:17) When you hear and taste the Word of God, you receive Jesus through faith. He doesn't come to you directly through your five senses, but He does come through the hearing of His Word. And when Jesus' Word is heard and seen, the Holy Spirit works a living faith in you. And the more the written and visible Word of God comes to you, the Holy Spirit works faith in you more and more. In this way you become more strongly convinced that Jesus is the Son of God who has paid for your sins and covered you with His righteousness. And in this you know you have life now and even forevermore. How do you live knowing that your sins are paid for and that you stand righteous before God for Christ's sake? Isn't it much different than someone who doesn't know Jesus?

Peter sums it up perfectly and sums you up perfectly: "Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet 1:8-9) Joy and salvation is the outcome of knowing Jesus. That is why Jesus tells His apostles: "A little while, and you will see Me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see Me." (v. 16) The apostles have seen Jesus with their five senses. They've heard Him preach both publicly and privately. They saw what He looked like and heard what He sounded like when He was teaching, healing, cleansing, and also when He was angry with the money changers.

They heard Him console the widow who lost her son. They heard Him weep over Jerusalem and the premature death of Lazarus. They felt His touch as He cleansed their feet. They were participants at the very first Lord's Supper where they ate the Bread and drank wine from the blessed cup. I'm sure they drank the water turned into wine. They were there when the woman anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. And very soon Jesus will be taken from them. Jesus warns them so that they don't lose hope. In their ignorance, they expected Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom. Can you imagine how they felt as they huddled together in the upper room scared for their lives?

The world rejoiced when Jesus was crucified. The apostles mourned. Their Lord was dead! The Man they put all their trust in hung upon a cross dead. He laid in the tomb three days. I'm sure the apostles felt like all hope was lost. Jesus didn't want them paralyzed in hopelessness, so He warns them. But He also warns you. We cannot prove the resurrection of Jesus. We have amazing evidence that Jesus is, in fact, raised from the dead. We have four eyewitness accounts written within a generation of Jesus' death on the cross. These stand up in any court as reliable historical accounts. If the Jews wanted to prove that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, they had the perfect opportunity, but they couldn't do it. Twelve cowards become so bold in proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, most of them suffered horrible deaths. Would anyone do that for a lie? We have the testimony of the centurion. Centurions were experts at crucifying people. There's no denying that Jesus died on the cross. We have extra-Biblical accounts of the life of Jesus. We have eyewitness accounts of over 500 people of the resurrected Christ, many of whom were still alive at the writing of the epistles. There's many more evidences of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but no matter how convincingly you show that evidence to unbelievers, many are not convinced. People are only convinced through the Word of God by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The world doesn't want a resurrected Jesus. If you have a resurrected Jesus, you have a Jesus who is God.

If you have Jesus who is God, you must amend your life. The world is happy in its sin. It doesn't want to change. The Christian knows that if Christ isn't raised from the dead, then there truly is no hope because we're still in our sin. But the Christian knows that Christ is raised from the dead and that all their sin is covered by the blood of Jesus. Christians have true joy. And Jesus says, "no one will take your joy from you." (v. 22) Here we need to distinguish between joy and happiness.

Happiness is a fleeting thing. If you chase after it, you won't catch it. Many seek it in sex and drugs and possessions and experiences. Yet these things prove hollow if you pursue them to be happy. Instead of providing happiness, these things prove to be enslaving. So many in our country, including some of us, are enslaved by these things. They promise happiness and only provide tears and emptiness. There's no life in these things. They will pass away just as all of us must pass away. Jesus came to break us free from our slavery to sin so that we might get a taste of life and not death. Jesus came so that we might have joy.

Joy is much stronger and deeper than happiness. Even if you have moments of happiness, which we all do, it passes away quickly. Joy is something deeper. Joy is knowing that Jesus has paid for your sins and covered you in His righteousness. Joy is knowing that nothing can separate you from the love of Jesus. You experience this joy by experiencing Jesus in His Word. And this joy is present with you when you're sad or anxious or happy or excited. It doesn't go away because Jesus doesn't go away. He sent His Holy Spirit to you so that you have this joy all the time in all circumstances in life. And the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God. We'll talk more about that next week.

You don't see Jesus with your eyes, but you do see Him through the eyes of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. You don't feel Jesus with your hand or tongue, but you do touch and taste His body and blood through the eyes of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You don't feel Jesus with you in the hospital room, but you do feel Him through the eyes of faith in His Christians who come to serve you. And through the eyes of faith, you have true joy. Joy that cannot be taken from you.

Today is *jubilate* Sunday. *Jubilate* means to shout for joy. We shout for joy because our risen Lord is with us. And if our Lord is with us, who can be against us? Can hardship or sickness or even death remove our joy from us? As Paul says in the strongest terms, "By no means!"

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!