

183. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – I

*Peace to soothe our bitter woes,
God in Christ on us bestows;
Jesus bought our peace with God
With His holy, precious blood;
Peace in Him for sinners found,
Is the Gospel's joyful sound.
(ELH 595:1)*

John 20:19–23 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

It is completely certain that Jesus has earned eternal life for all of us. He truly redeemed us all from sin, death, and the devil, and won for us eternal salvation. But now it is necessary for all who shall enjoy this salvation to come to Jesus and receive grace, so that they may experience redemption and truly live thereby. And the Lord has also taken care of this. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation and sends His servants out into all the world with the word of salvation. “As the Father sent Me, I also send you.” He did the Father’s work and procured forgiveness of sins and peace. The servants of the Word go forth on *His* mission with forgiveness of sins and peace for all who will repent. *He Himself is present in the Word with His atoning death and His resurrection.* As the Crucified and Risen One, who ascends to His glory, He says: “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” [*Mat 28:20*]. Take note of this: “always, even to the end of the age,” so not just with the Apostles, but with all their successors in the service of the Word as well. He stands and speaks peace not only with the Ten, but with all who are gathered in His name, that is: gathered around His Word and Sacraments to be edified in faith.

And His gift of peace is no empty word, it is a heavenly reality, which settles itself sweetly and powerfully in every soul who is opened to it. The Word of absolution is not a human word; it is indeed the Lord’s own Word and therefore powerful to give what it says: forgiveness of sins. *The Lord* tells you that all your sins are forgiven you; shouldn’t it be true then? If only you receive it with faith in your heart, then they are indeed forgiven. The word of men may deceive, but *God’s Word* never deceives. Don’t you hear that *Jesus* says He is sending His servants, just as the Father sent Him? So when the minister who gives you the gift has the real Word, then you should receive it as from Christ Himself. If the Word is there, then the Lord is there with His gift. If the Word is real, then the gift is real. Don’t let it worry you whether the minister who gives you the gift is a believer or not, as long as the Word is real. For not the minister’s faith, but Christ’s will and Word give you the treasure. If the pastor is one whom I cannot have confidence in, then I cannot entrust myself to him as my soul’s caretaker in difficult circumstances, in spiritual struggles and temptation. But otherwise I can still receive redemption through him for a blessing to my soul and defense against sin and death. Unbelieving and believing ministers *the Lord* shall judge; don’t let *that* be your concern. But let *this* be your concern when you are absolved, *that your heart believes what you hear*, the Word of the forgiveness of sins from the Lord’s mouth. For then you have indeed what the Word says to you, but whoever does not believe makes God a liar. From this preserve us, good Holy Spirit! Amen.

O Jesus, grant Thy grace to me
To honor e'er Thy priesthood
As highly honored as by Thee;
Thy doctrine and Thy true blood—
O may I never cast away;
Nor let my heart e'er harden,
Nor let me ever go astray
And lose Thy gracious pardon.

The Word of comfort Thou hast sent
To soothe all souls despairing,
To all whose hearts by sin are rent,
Now let my heart be hearing!
Grant me forgiveness for my sin
And loose my chains of bondage!
Then free from judgment I am seen
And shall not bear Thine umbrage.

*Kingo: O Jesus Praest i Evighed L 366:4-5 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Durch Adams Fall (ELH 430);
alternate hymn: O faithful God, thanks be to Thee ELH 522:1.4*

184. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – II

“Come, Holy Spirit, and teach me now that Jesus is my life.” Amen.

1 John 5:4–12 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth:¹ the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The Spirit testifies at Jesus' Baptism that He is God's Son (Matthew 3:17). But the water He is baptized in — to suffer death, and the water which flows from His side, as well as the blood He shed in death for our atonement, these two, the water and the blood, must be added so that He can be our Savior. So the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood testify together that God has given us His Son as Savior. *The Spirit's* testimony cannot be denied; He is the chief Witness. But the *Blood* and the *Water* cannot be denied either. (Note John's words in his gospel 19:34-35: "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.") If we did not have these three: the Spirit and the Water and the Blood, then we wouldn't know for sure that God gave His Son for us. But now since we have these three as constant living witnesses for the eyes and ears of faith, *through them we are certain that God's Son died for us and lives for us*. The same testimony of *the Spirit* that once sounded over Jesus, still sounds for us through the Word. We have in our Baptism the *Water* in which Jesus was

¹ NKJV footnote: "Nestle-Aland and United Bible Society's *Greek New Testament*, and the Majority Text, omit the words from *in heaven* (verse 7) through *on earth* (verse 8). Only four or five very late Greek manuscripts contain these words."

baptized, and the water from His side, together with the Blood. Likewise we have *the Blood* He shed as well as His Body in the Holy Supper. Whoever does not believe this testimony of God must seriously ask how these three, the Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar, can continue and exert such divine power in our human world. But whoever believes has the testimony in himself and knows that the Spirit has created a new life in him.

This life is *eternal life*, dear Christian. For your new nature, your sanctified mind, which loves God and the brethren, but hates sin and denies the flesh and overcomes the world: what else is that but Christ in you? Without seeing Him you hold fast to Him through these three witnesses. You have Him and love Him from the heart. God's Son is in you and you in Him. — If you have this life, then you are blessed; if not, then you are surely in death. But come and hear. The triple testimony still sounds forth. Hurry, before it is too late! You must be born of God and overcome the world, or else you are lost.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes and our ears. Help us to believe, overcome our unbelief by Your Spirit's testimony, and draw our hearts to You, so that You may be our life. Amen.

Preserve me, Lord, from worldly lore
That God's wisdom is spurning;
The proper meaning of Thy Word
Grant that I may be learning,
And keep me steadfast by Thy pow'r
Until my life's most final hour.
Thy name be praised forever!

For all things let Thy death and blood
Bring comfort for my grieving,
And may my spirit by Thy good
Thy merit be receiving,
To live and die by Thy good name,
To know the world is empty fame,
Unworthy of our mention.

And when my faith becomes too weak
'Midst dangers tantalizing,
Then help me find the Light I seek
That soon shall be arising,
And fan to life my fading flame,
Strength for the broken reed reclaim,
By power of Thy Spirit!

Denicke: O Jesu, Troens dyre Skat L 371:4-6 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Es ist gewisslich (ELH 25);

alternate hymn: If God Himself be for me ELH 517:3

185. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Monday

Lord Jesus, overcome our unbelief; grant us grace to believe. Amen.

John 20:24–31 But Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the

presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

How dark it seemed in Thomas' soul, while he walked in unbelief! Was the Lord not risen and alive then? Was He not near? Was what Thomas thought in his unbelief true? O many who hear the Word and use the Sacraments are far worse unbelievers than Thomas and do not know the least bit of Christ's peace, though the Lord truly is among us with His saving gifts. The other disciples who believe, those who had seen Him risen there, *believe* without seeing, — they had the truth, and they received peace. If you saw Christ die for you, saw Him nailed to the cross and dead, and saw Him risen with the nail prints and wounded side, if you saw Him open His arms to you and heard Him call to you with His own voice, would you then fall down and say with Thomas: "My Lord and my God!"? Would you give yourself to Him with your whole heart and serve Him with your whole soul? Would you rejoice in His love, be appalled at your sin, believe His forgiveness and hold on to His grace? Let us hope so. But now He is just as near to you in the Word, and yet you continue without peace in your heart! Truly, it is His own voice you hear in the preaching of the Gospel, in the Absolution, and the words of the Sacraments! Do you dare really think that your unbelief, which denies this or doubts it, is the truth, but the Lord's own promise is a lie? What was right and true: Jesus' Word about His resurrection or Thomas' unbelief and denial? What is right and true: the Lord's Word about His presence with grace and peace among His own until the end, or your unbelief which denies these? Poor soul, understand that He *could* still reveal Himself before our physical eyes, *if He wanted*, but He has decided: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Be satisfied with what the Lord in His gracious plan for our salvation has confirmed, and bow yourself before it: Believe without seeing, and you are saved. You can do it by God's power in the Word. For *the Word* is the Spirit's means to create and sustain faith in us. — Away with accursed unbelief, which makes the eternal true God into a liar! Yes, away with unbelief; it is a lie and belongs to the devil!

We pray You, merciful God, free us from the world's dead faith, which receives Your grace in vain. And free us from the doubting thoughts of our unbelieving heart, which do not fully and completely let You rule over us with the truth of life. Give us the true faith, O give us the true, living faith, which builds simply on Your Word, receives Your grace, confesses Your name, and makes the soul confident in life and death. Amen.

O Jesus, Treasure of our faith,
Beginning and its Ending!
O sweetest Jesus, grant me faith
Of Thy most gracious sending:
To have the faith within my heart
Thyself who surely True Faith art,
True faith, not dead, but living.

Teach me to put my confidence
In God, my dearest Father,
In Thee who art benevolence
To those who sin doth bother,
And in Thy Holy Ghost, our Light,
To trust in Thee, both day and night,
O Trinity most holy.

Let me the beauty of Thy grace
And Thy sure Word be knowing
That I may feel Thy sure embrace,
Repentance in me showing;
Sweet Jesus, stay with me for aye,
My Way, my Truth, my Life always,
And faith's sure path to heaven!

*Denicke: O Jesu, Troens dyre Skat L 371:1-3 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Es ist gewisslich (ELH 25);
alternate hymn: Now I have found the ground wherein ELH 499:1*

186. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Tuesday

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. This grant us, O God. [Psa 73:25]

Colossians 3:1–6 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

Everything depends on being united with Christ. The fellowship of the heart with Him—that is living Christianity. Then we died with Him, and then we are raised with Him. Christ is the true life of the believer. Whoever does not live in Christ is not a Christian. What kind of Christianity is that which is not life? But what kind of life would Christianity be without the life of Jesus Christ? No one wants a dead hope in Christ! For Christ has conquered death. He is a living God who makes all His people alive and gives them a living hope.

Since Christ is in heaven, the heart of the believer who lives in Him must be in heaven. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” [Mat 6:21]. “God raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). Attitude and desire are made free and heavenly. The soul’s longing reaches beyond this life, and its goal is eternal communion with God in perfect holiness. Since we are dead to the world, we are dead to its glory and joy, its treasure and goods, its poverty and trouble, dead to its sentences and rules, to its teaching and yoke. And the world considers us dead and lost. The life we live is Christ’s life, and it is hidden with Christ in God. Just as Christ is invisible to the world, so also His life is in the believers. Their faith in the Lord, their hope and peace and joy in Him, their love, their holy desire for heaven, their zeal for purity, their self-denial and struggle against the devil, their prayer in holiness of heart, in short: *their life in God*, it is completely hidden to the world. They do not see it, they do not know it, they regard it as a dream and nothing. The Christian’s glory is covered over with trouble and poverty and pain and tears, yes with sin and *much weakness*. — But Christ shall be revealed, and you shall be revealed with Him in glory. Rejoice in this hope, and do not be perplexed by your troubled condition here in the world. Your earthly limbs must surely be mortified, and the Lord will help you with the cross. The wicked desires are the limbs of the old Adam which by your conversion to the Lord have received their deathblow, but are not yet completely destroyed. They want to draw you back to earth — suppress them with the cross of Christ, mortify them for the sake of Jesus Christ!

Lord Jesus, do You know me that I live in You and You in me? Grant this, merciful Savior. “O take my heart, and soul and might, And fill them with Your heav’nly light.” Amen.

I will not let Thee go—
In Jesus I am living;
From faith's beginning, He
New life to me was giving;
The life He gave to me
He will uphold for aye
Until the end of time
When earth shall pass away.

I will not let Thee go—
With Jesus I will suffer;
He lightens ev'ry cross
And comfort sure doth offer;
He turns it all for good,
For He abides with me
And grants me strength to bear
My cross most patiently.

I will not let Thee go—
With Jesus I will fight on
Against all Satan's pow'rs
And death no more shall frighten;
When enemies assail
And put on me their blame,
My Jesus fights for me
And puts them all to shame.

I will not let Thee go—
With Jesus I am ready
To die; for He's with me;
My heart He sure doth steady.
Without Him I would die,
But with Him I am free
To walk on heaven's way,
To live eternally.

*German: Jeg slipper Jesum ei L 370:1-4 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Nun danket alle Gott (ELH 63);
alternate hymn: Jesus I will never leave ELH 362:2-3*

187. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Wednesday

Teach us, Lord Jesus, to go where You Yourself have said, and to meet You there. Amen.

John 21:1-6 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

The Lord told the disciples that He would reveal Himself to them in Galilee, so they are now at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). But although He lives in them, so that they think of Him and speak of Him, yet they do not expect His revelation right now. So they go out fishing. And though He Himself stands on the seashore and says to them: "Little children!" and bids them cast the net to the right side of the ship, He is a stranger to

them. (The Apostles had not yet had Pentecost.) — But doesn't the same thing often happen to us? "I want to meet you in My Gospel" He says: "in the Gennesaret of Baptism and at the Table of My Supper." We come there, and He is there, but we do not recognize Him. "I want to reveal Myself to you in the Galilee of poverty and lowliness," He says: "I want to meet you in My poor members on earth." He leads us there and is there in front of us, but we do not see Him, we do not see it is the Lord.

It was the disciples' fortune, that they obeyed His word. He had told them, and they had gone to Galilee. They were of the truth, so He found them where He was, and they found Him there too. He was their treasure, their life: could they stay away then, and could He hide Himself for long? Let us follow them, and we shall experience the same thing. Let us go and meet the Lord where He has made His appointment with us: in the Means of Grace, in the way of self-denial under the cross. Then it will happen to us as to them: we know He is there and yet we forget it. We expect His revelation, but in a way other than He said. We do not recognize Him; our spirit is weak and our inner eye is dim. Yet He doesn't leave because of that. He never disappoints, He comes before we know it, — He is there, when we do not think so, — He reveals Himself also for us when it is necessary, reveals Himself — not to our senses, but to our spirit. He chastens us and helps our faith. But do not forget: it all depends on our going to Galilee with the sincerity of the disciples, as He told us. *There* He is. And the Stranger on the seashore whom we brush aside with a brief: "No, we have nothing," gives us a richer catch than we can carry. — Cast the net on the right side, brethren, cast the net on the right side of the ship!

Praise to You, Lord Jesus, You are always near Your poor people whose faith is so frail! Now we want to believe from the heart without seeing and always to thank You and serve You and never forsake You. Help us to this end. Grant it to us of Your mercy! Amen.

*See how Jesus in all places
Now is present with each one
Who with joy the Lord embraces
And whose heart with Him is one,
And to His disciples He
Shows Himself most gloriously;
When behind locked doors they're quaking,
He begins His sweetest speaking.*

Lead me, Jesus, to remember
That You ever-present are;
Then sins' chains are rent asunder
When I think how near You are.
Come, O Jesus, take Your place
In my heart, my soul's embrace!
In my joy and in my sorrow
You are with me till the morrow.

Let Your peace be my salvation,
While upon this earth live I,
And my spirit be th' oblation
To Your peace when I shall die.
Show the tokens of Your pain
That my faith new strength may gain
By Your death and all Your suffering,
For me was Your gracious offering.

*Open now my heart to You, Lord,
Jesus, make me e'er to see
What Your death and pain afforded,
Show me Your great victory.
Jesus, cause me e'er to know
All You would on me bestow
Grant me ne'er from You to sever
But to be so blest forever.*

*Kingo: Se, hvor Jesus allevegne L 367:2-3 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Werde munter (ELH 354);
alternate hymn: O God, our Help in ages past ELH 160:1-2*

188. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Thursday

Lord, teach us to say from the heart:

Not unto us, not unto us, but to Your name be glory given. Amen. [Psa 115:1]

John 21:7–14 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

John, the Apostle of *Love*, has the keenest eye and recognizes Jesus first. His writings also testify of his deep knowledge of the Lord. Love sees best. But Peter is always the most fervent and boldest. Even on Easter he entered the grave first. The other five who are in the ship quietly do their work of dragging the net. In this event one sees a picture of the diversity of gifts among the Lord’s people. One has John’s innermost love and keen eye, another has Peter’s zeal and courage, while others have their strength in quiet, patient endurance with their unimpressive work. Likewise here we have a look into the work of the Apostles and the whole Church with the catch of souls, which the Lord Himself has taught us in that earlier catch of fish by Peter, when Jesus said: “From now on you shall catch men” (Luke 5:10).

But what we especially want to impress upon one another from this gospel is John’s words: “*It is the Lord!*” It is *the Lord* who says: “Cast the net on the right side of the boat.” The Lord commands all His disciples to cast out the net of the Word. The Lord sent the Apostles out into the world, and the same Lord has sent you, so now cast the net of the Gospel out into the sea of people and down into the depths of the heart. If the Lord had not commanded His Church: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” [Mar 16:15], then you would not be His witness. — That you are such, “it is the Lord.” It is His doing. — It is still the Lord who gives success with the catch. When the servant of the Word receives grace to gather many converts into the number of the saints, then it is God’s Word which does it, the Word and not the preacher. Let the preacher guard himself from taking the glory! It is indeed not his. Let him also beware of belittling others who share the same work, whose success may not be visible. Perhaps they work with greater patience and faithfulness even if they do not draw many fish to land. If the Lord Himself were not with you in the Word, then you would accomplish nothing, — that you do accomplish something, “it is the Lord.” — “It is the Lord,” let John’s spirit whisper this into our soul when we

become discouraged, then we get courage anew. When we become idle, then it should refresh us again. And when we become proud, then it shall humble us again. Truly it is *the Lord* who has set you at your post, servant of Christ, and He is with you and blesses you.

But when the apostles of unbelief hear the cry: “Cast your nets on the left side, on the banks of human reason, and tear many with you away from faith,” then is *that* the Lord? They want to know of no lord. Ownerless, they want to be their own lord. They do not know that they are inspired by their lord [*Satan*].

Grant us to hear Your voice and to recognize Your form, Lord Jesus. Grant us love and wisdom and faithfulness in Your work, and grace to save many souls by Your Word. Amen.

Jesus' hands stretch forth, receiving
Each sad soul with gracious nod.
Doubt now sees, and faith's believing,
Saying now: "My Lord and God!"
Filled with heav'nly love so pure,
Now His peace He doth assure,
As a fruit of His dear Passion,
Making us His holy nation.

Sweetest Jesus, when I follow
After Thee in doubt's dark night,
When I pray with sighing hollow,
Let my soul still hold Thee tight.
Speak Thy wondrous: "It is I!"
Make the pow'rs of darkness fly!
They can do me harm no longer,
For my Jesus' pow'r is stronger.

*Boye: Jesus staar og rækker Hænder L 368 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Freu dich sehr (ELH 256);
alternate hymn: Jesus shall reign ELH 193*

189. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Friday

O God, fill our hearts with Christ's love. Amen.

John 21:15–19 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

What a Gospel this is! How rich in edification is this conversation between the Lord and Peter! What heartfelt power lies in this question of the Lord's: “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” What chastening love in the words: “more than these?” What a glimpse into Peter's heart his answer gives, especially when we connect it with his bold speech at Kidron! What a lesson for those who care for souls in the connection between the question: “Do you love Me?” and the command: “Feed My lambs!” What a penitential sermon are these three repeated questions and the name “Simon, son of Jonah!” But what gentleness, that the Lord expressed the words “more than these” in the second question,

and that in the third He uses a different expression for “love,” the same that Peter uses! What a connection between the Apostle’s meekness and his reinstatement as the chief of the Apostles! What a meeting of the hearts, what an embrace of the hearts in the whole conversation, growing more fervent with every word! What exalted love and wisdom in the Lord, and what a meek, reverent, and trusting attitude of discipleship in Peter! How blessed then to lay his soul at Jesus’ feet and to be laid open to His heart by the Lord Himself! But how serious right away again to hear about the test of love, tribulation, pains, and self-denial unto death!

May God’s own Spirit explain it to you! I would only ask you especially to hear and answer the Lord’s question: “Do you love Me?” It is not spoken just to Peter. It is His loving question to each of us. If you would take it right to heart, then it could come to bestow upon you the most blessed thing to be found: a soul filled with God’s love. “Do you love Me?” the Lord asks you, because He loves you. Your most precious Friend on earth calls your name, dear and sweet to Him, and asks you with love’s sincerity: “Do you love Me?” Then gladly assure Him of your love, and let your heart’s flame burn brighter and blaze higher. Now with eternal love’s heavenly desire for your soul Jesus asks you if you love Him. You know it is because He loves you. You know He puts such great value on your love that He died to win it. Answer now: Do you love Him? O *answer!* Jesus asks you: “Do you love Me?” Blessed is everyone who grasps the question in the inmost heart and who can answer: “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” O the whole world ought to be so blessed to be able to answer: “Yes, I love You, Lord Jesus, with my whole heart!” But most would be lying if they said “Yes.” Accursed souls who do not love Him! I hope that you know Peter’s sorrowful attitude and have his gentle, true answer in your heart: “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You!” “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You!” Speak out like Peter. Answer the Lord rightly that your heart hears Him and His love shall permeate your soul more and more.

We pray You fervently, God, we pray You and cannot let You go unless You hear us: Give us a heart filled with Jesus’ love. Amen.

Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts!
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled, to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee, Thou art good,
To them that find Thee, all in all.

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead,
And thirst from Thee our souls to fill.

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad that Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest, that our faith can hold Thee fast.

O Jesus, ever with us stay
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light!

*Bernard of Clairvaux: Jesu dulcis memoria L 66:20.26.29.30 ELH 318 tr. R. Palmer;
tune: Jesu Dulcis Memoria (ELH 318); alternate hymn: Jesus, Thy boundless love to me ELH 372:2*

190. Easter 2, Quasimodogeniti – Saturday

Lord, grant me gladly to carry Your cross after You. Amen.

John 21:20–23 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”

“**F**ollow Me,” Jesus says to Peter, that is: “Follow Me in suffering and death.” And the Lord gets up and leaves the meal, and Peter follows Him. So he will follow Him in crucifixion. But John follows too. Then Peter asks, either on John’s behalf that the Lord might also show his coming fate, or out of surprise and curiosity: “But Lord, what about this man?” But Jesus refuses the question and says that it will answer itself. Should John then not go the way of tribulation, when he followed after the Lord? Yes, indeed! there is no other way to follow the Lord. “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me’” [Luk 9:23]. “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” [Luk 14:27]. But not everyone’s cross is the same: Peter has his, and John his. The Lord gives each one what is fitting for him. He can exempt His dearest friend from a martyr’s death, He can exempt him and — deny him the crown. He can give him other sufferings and other honors which are not less. The only thing Jesus emphasizes here by dismissing Peter’s question is that he should take up his cross. Do not ask curiously and be dissatisfied if others suffer less than you, or if they have more honor than you, or why your path might be narrower or your power less in relation to the size of your cross. No believer has too hard or too light a cross. No one would be served by exchanging with someone else. There is a selfish dissatisfaction which murmurs against God and envies others; keep yourself from giving it room! If you made a trade, you would soon see that someone else’s cross does not fit you. Take yours and follow Jesus! There is an obedient devotion, which teaches us to suffer quietly, to give thanks for everything and gladly bear burdens for one another. “Follow Me,” the Lord says. These words we will take with us and go and do it. None of us then will lack the struggle and pain of the cross, but neither shall we lack the joy and honor of the cross, the eternal blessing of the cross.

Draw us to You, Lord Jesus. You know we want to follow You, and You know the unwillingness of our flesh against the cross. Draw us after You. Grant us grace to walk in Your footsteps and carry our cross and learn to rejoice under it, to the praise of Your name and the strengthening of our brethren. Amen.

O how my heart shall then delight
When I no more refuse Thee
Then no more sorrow or sad plight
Need drive me back to choose Thee;
Thy holy Word and voice:
My happy only choice;
All other thoughts I shall disown
And follow in Thy steps alone.

Thy Word's calm sea I float upon;
Thy thorns I choose with gladness.
I know that roses grow thereon
To sweeten all my sadness!
These trials lead me on
The path to glory's throne;
How wise for heav'n are those who care
Our Jesus' easy yoke to bear.

*Bonin/Brorson: Den Vei, du gik i Kors og Trang L 424:4-5 tr. DeGarmeaux;
tune: Der lieben Sonne Licht (ELH 252); alternate hymn: In the cross of Christ I glory ELH 523:1.4*