



*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they will be forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld ... these (signs of Jesus) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

John 20:22b-23, 31

Our Lord was put to death to pay the price for our sins and raised again to declare us right with the Father, that we might be restored to the promise of eternal life that God had intended for Adam and all of His offspring at creation. God first distributes these benefits to us in our Baptism, and continues to do so every time He calls and gathers us to receive His gifts in His services to us. Consider that as baptized Christians we are all sinner-saints. As such, we are all like the half-dead man of whom Jesus speaks in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We cannot save ourselves and are totally dependent on God's grace and mercy. And He provides: every time we receive His forgiveness, we are quite literally brought back to life! We confess this every time we pray Dr. Luther's post-communion collect:

“We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have *refreshed* us through this salutary gift...”

Furthermore, in the same collect, we pray:

“... and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another...”

In deep gratitude for having been given God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, we in turn love one another and our neighbors as He has loved us. We help them as we can with things they might need to support their bodies and lives. Furthermore, we invite any who are unchurched to hear the Good News of our crucified and risen Lord, praying that they too might believe and have eternal life in His name. This is God's will for us, and we beg Him to help us carry it out. Even as newborn infants (yes, even as single-cell zygotes), *all* people matter to Him and thus they matter to us as well. And when we fail, we know that with repentance, there is forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. After all, God is patient with us as He was with Thomas, Peter, and so many others in their moments of failure. He *really* wants us and all people to live! This means that even in times of illness and as we approach the end of our earthly lives, we Christians have the certain hope that, as Jesus rose from the dead, and as we rose out of the waters of our Baptisms and rise again every time we receive His forgiveness, we will likewise rise on the Last Day, our perfected bodies reunited with our souls, to live in eternal bliss in His presence.

Alleluia, Christ is risen! Joyous and blessed Eastertide from all of us on the English District Lifeline team.