

We Are People of the Water and the Blood

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER [b]

May 6, 2018

1 JOHN 5:1-8

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ **For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.** ⁵ **Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** ⁶ **This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.** ⁷ **For there are three that testify:** ⁸ **the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.**

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

Jesus came by water. He walked to the Jordan River, where the prophet John baptized him in the same water in which John had been baptizing the sinners. Tax-collectors, drunks, adulterers, liars, the envious and devious, the stingy and miserly, all the sinners of Jerusalem, they were going out to the prophet John at the Jordan to have him wash their sins away in that water. The sinners walked away with consciences cleansed.

We can't, of course, wash sins into water. But John was a prophet of God in Heaven, and with that water was bound the Word of God from Heaven, so that, by the voice and hand of the prophet John, that water in the Jordan was taken up into the Lord's use to cleanse the sinners.

In that water Jesus was baptized. Though he had no sin, he was publicly joined to all the sinners. The sins of all the sinners belonged to him, so that at Jesus' baptism, the Prophet John proclaimed, **Behold, the Lamb of God. The One taking away the sin of the world.** [John 1:29]

He came by water. So that he is then to be publicly known as *the Christ*, which is the Greek word meaning *the Anointed One*—anointed to save sinners from death and bring them into the kingdom of life.

He came by water. So that as he leaves the water of the Jordan, he is now on his way to the cross.

Because, he came not by water only, but by the water and the blood. The office he took upon himself to be the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, the office he was anointed into by the water of John's baptism, the office of the Christ to save all sinners, this office is accomplished at the cross, where the One bearing the sins of the world willingly sheds holy blood to atone for all.

He came by water and blood. The water baptizing him with sinners, the blood atoning for the sin he willingly took upon himself.

(But all of this does not yet do us any good. For we were not at his Baptism; we were not at his cross; and we can no more make those events our own than we can go back and shake hands with, say, George Washington as he's crossing the Potomac. The baptism of Jesus and his cross, the water and the blood, we just cannot make them our own.)

Then, having taken all sin upon himself, and having atoned for all sinners with his own blood, God the Son ascended to his Father, where he now intercedes for the sinner.

So the conversation in Heaven now is about you and me. It is between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is not unlike their conversation when, in the beginning, they said among one another, **Let us make Man in our Image**, and then, **in the Image of God he created Man, male and female, he created them.**

[Genesis 1:27]

Now, though, their conversation is not to create, but to justify. For God created man and woman holy. Now, found in our sin, we are justified, we are declared righteous, by the conversation between the Father and the Son.

But this conversation does not yet do us any good. For we are not present. The justification of the sinner as the Son intercedes to the Father on our behalf, is of no benefit to us, unless it is brought to us and made our own.

So the Spirit is the One who testifies. From the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit proceeds. He comes to us to justify us in our own lives. To make us his own.

But how does the Holy Spirit make this this testimony to us? How does he justify the sinner here on Earth? How does he bring all the gifts of Jesus to the ones who need them—to you and me?

By water and blood. 1 John 5:6:

⁶ This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies.

Jesus intercedes to the Father for us. He intercedes that the Father forgive our sins and keep us as his Own.

“Now, [Father,] I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.”

[John 17:11]

Hearing the intercession of his Son that sinners be forgiven, the Father forgives and declares us righteous, by virtue of his Son’s atoning blood.

But you and I know nothing of this conversation, we remain in our darkness, we are left covered in shame, until the Holy Spirit is sent forth from the Father and the Son, to testify to us of the conversation between the Father and the Son, and to bring us into the Son’s intercession here on Earth as clearly as the Father hears it in Heaven.

How does the Holy Spirit bring that conversation to us and make it our own? Through the water and the blood. *Not by water only, says John, but by the water and the blood.*

So the Holy Spirit gives sinners to be baptized into the forgiveness of sins. Bearing the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit from Baptism, the sinner then knows he or she belongs to the conversation in Heaven, knows that the intercession of Jesus is for him or her, and hears the Word of justification by which the Father declares the sinner righteous and to be his own.

Having clothed the sinner in the righteousness of Christ Jesus in the water of Baptism, the Holy Spirit then continues to call and gather the sinner to the blood, giving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to be eaten and drunk, so that the sinner is kept in oneness with the Father, as Jesus is in oneness with him, and, in oneness with the Father, we are in oneness with each other, thereby fulfilling the intercession of Jesus to his Father, **Father, keep them in your Name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.**

But the Holy Spirit does it by the water and the blood. Through this, he brings to us Jesus Christ. With Jesus we have all the gifts of Jesus—the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing of the conscience, the abundance of mercy, the intercession before his Father, the promise of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. With the gifts of Jesus, Jesus is making us one with his Father, and one with each other.

We will know none of this on our own. We are unable to justify ourselves before the Father, we cannot join ourselves into the heavenly conversation, we can no more make ourselves children of the Father by our own decision or choice than we can make ourselves to be born of anyone who's not our mom or dad, we can do nothing to make ourselves godly or Christian or anything else, for we are sinners, and we cannot make ourselves to be not who we fully are.

But the Holy Spirit can. He brings this conversation to us. He brings us into it, making it ours as gift. He bears witness to us of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit testifies to us of the One who came by water and blood, by being baptized into oneness with sinners and by shedding his blood to atone for them; and the Holy Spirit does this work of mercy toward us by the water of our Baptisms and the blood of the Lord's Table.

1 John 5:8:

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who has faith that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three are in oneness.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.