

LENTEN I

March 25, 2009

THE BODY OF CHRIST, the ears of Christ!

Introduction

The general theme of our 2009 Lenten season is entitled 'The Body of Christ'. God's Word actually applies that description to us as His church on earth. **1 Corinthians 12** 'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body ... so it is with Christ. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body ... now you are the body of Christ'. Or **Romans 5** 'so in Christ we who are many form one body', Or **Colossians 3** 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace ... let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly'.

Our ears can hear in those verses how we're recreated into the Body of Christ as His church on earth. Let me read parts of those verses once again for your ears to hear. **1 Cor. 12** says 'we were all baptized into one body', **Romans 5** says 'in Christ we form one body', **Colossians 3** tells us 'as members of one body ... let the Word of Christ dwell in you'. God recreates us into His body, His Church through the means of His grace; 'baptized into one body', 'in (communion) with Christ, one body', 'the Word of Christ in you ... as members of one body'.

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST!

The Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, through God's Word and Sacraments!

Each week this 2009 Lenten Season we, as the Body of Christ, are going to zero in on a body part = the ears of Christ this Ash Wednesday's theme, the hands of Christ, the eyes of Christ, the heart of Christ, the feet of Christ, the mouth of Christ, and consider how these body parts of Christ apply to us as the body of Christ 'through faith' by the means of God grace in Word and Sacraments. **WE ARE THE EARS OF CHRIST!**

I.

Jesus taught the woman at the well in John 4 saying 'God is spirit', and yet, the heartbeat of the gospel of God we need to hear through faith is the awesome good news that God who is spirit became man, became one of us with ears and hands and eyes and feet and heart and mouth and every other body part. God who is spirit became incarnate, flesh and blood to be our Savior. To be for us what we could never become ourselves perfect human beings though that is what God demands of us. As the Body of

Christ, His Church, we believe, teach and confess as our catechism puts it, that Jesus Christ 'is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man born of the Virgin Mary, my Lord'. What we confess is also what we hear from God Word.

1 John 5 'Jesus Christ ... is true God and eternal life'

Romans 9 'Christ ... is God over all, forever praised'

John 1 'In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God'

Colossians 2 'In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form'

So as the Body of Christ, the Church we have a God in Jesus Christ who is not deaf to us. We have a God in Jesus Christ who hears when we pray. We have a God in Jesus Christ who listens to us when we rejoice. We have a God in Jesus Christ who understands us human beings. Our God has ears that hear our cries, our God has ears that hear our sighs, our God has ears that hear our whys? ... why me? Why this? Why now?

Remember the story of how Jesus sent His disciples ahead in a boat while He stayed to pray (Matt. 14)? Later Jesus as God incarnate came walking to them on the water. Peter, bold Peter, came out of the boat trying to walk on the water also, but, seeing and hearing the wind and the waves, Peter begins to sink. The ears of Christ heard Peter's cry 'Lord, save me' and Jesus catches and saves Peter. Jesus, God in flesh and blood, our God with ears hears your cries also and He saves you. Hear this: **John 3 'God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Jesus'**

All of our ears like to hear encouragement from people. We like to hear people say 'I love you'. Our ears like to hear our bosses and supervisors say 'you did a good job'. Our ears like to hear friends tell us 'you're important in my life'. Jesus ears as our God incarnate, our Savior likes to hear love and encouragement and praise also. Remember the question Jesus asked His disciples, Luke 9 'Who do you say I am?' and once again bold Peter steps forward and answers for the group 'You are the Christ of God'. That confession of faith had to be music to Jesus' ears. Remember in John 11 Jesus' friend Martha expressing her faith in Jesus while she was mourning the death of her brother Lazarus? 'Yes, Lord' Martha says 'I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God'. Jesus, our God with ears hears our cries, our whys, our prayers, our praise, our encouragement, our confessions of faith in Him also. We have a God with ears that hear as our Old Testament reading, 2 Sam. 22 says 'to my God I call ... my God heard my voice' Wow!

That is some awfully good news for my ears to hear as the Body of Christ, His Church.

II.

Jesus' ears as God in flesh and blood also heard opposition as our Savior. Jesus heard the scribes and Pharisees saying 'by what authority are You, Jesus, doing these things?' after Jesus cleansed the temple (Luke 20). Jesus' ears as God in flesh and blood, as our Savior also heard His own disciples deny and betray and desert Him. Jesus' ears heard Peter boldly boast (Mark 14) 'though all the others fall away, I will never fall away'. And yet Peter denies Jesus three times saying 'I don't know the man'. Jesus' ears heard Judas say 'Greetings, Rabbi' (Matt. 26) in the Garden of Gethsemane as Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss of friendship. The sound of Judas' kiss must have sounded deadly to our God's ears. Jesus' ears heard the peoples voices on Palm Sunday shouting 'Hosanna', turn on Good Friday to the cry 'Crucify Him, crucify Him'.

We have a God in Jesus Christ whose ears hear. Our God hears our curses, also. Our God hears our insults. Our God hears our denials. Our God hears our betrayals. Our God hears our very inner thoughts. But, in Jesus Christ our God was willing to hear the pounding of the nails into His hands and feet as all those curses and insults and denials and betrayals, all of our sins were nailed vicariously into Jesus. Jesus, God incarnate, hanging upon that cross in our place as our substitute hears the most mysterious and the most awful thing of all = Jesus hears the silence of God. Taking our place, taking upon Himself our sinfulness, God and all of heaven become silent in the awfulness and the awesomeness of it all as Jesus cries out 'My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?' Hear this! Listen! Jesus was forsaken by the silence of God, for us. So when we feel as if we have a God who does not hear our prayers, when we think we have a God who doesn't seem to accept our praise, when we feel as if God Himself has abandoned us in silence, 'Through faith,' by means of God's grace, in Word and Sacrament, as the Body of Christ, we can hear the good news in the silence of the cross that we have a God, in Jesus Christ, who's been there in our place for us. So, we can hear, 'through faith,' our God, in Jesus Christ, cry out upon that cross, 'It is finished,' and the condemnation of our sins, the accusations of Satan against us. The fearful growls of death have all been silenced by and before God. And, as Jesus body laid in the silence of the grave, we hear the astounding good news of the angels of Easter, where our Lenten journey will lead us. 'He is not here! He is risen!' Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Conclusion

As the Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, we have gathered this first week of Lent, Ash Wednesday, to hear 'through faith,' once again, that 'we are ash, that we are dust, and to dust and ash we will all return'. We are human, and we will die. We need to hear that verdict upon our sin from God's Law, in order to truly hear the Gospel good news of Jesus Christ. We need to hear who He is and hear what He has done for us. Jesus is our God with ears, and we are His Body.

As Jesus said to the deaf man in our Gospel lesson 'Ephaphatha ... be opened,' and As James wrote to those early 1st Century Christians, 'be doers of the Word and not hears only,' we, as the Body of Christ, His Holy Christian Church, no longer keep Jesus' Messianic Secret to 'tell no one'. We zealously proclaim that our Jesus, our God, has done all things well and complete. It is finished. Jesus makes us His Body through Word and Sacrament to hear and to speak. We are the Ears of Christ. As Jesus many times invites, He invites each of us today 'Let anyone who has ears to hear, let them hear'. Amen.