

3 April 2005
Easter 2

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Satisfaction Guaranteed”

Text: John 20:19-31 (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Satisfaction guaranteed. That’s a good thing, isn’t it? If we subscribe to a magazine and it doesn’t quite live up to our expectations, we can cancel it and get our money back. If the steak we order at a restaurant isn’t done the way we asked, we send it back until it is cooked to our satisfaction. And many of the things we buy for our homes come *satisfaction guaranteed* – that if it’s not what we want, we can return it and try something else.

Satisfaction guaranteed. That’s a good thing, isn’t it? Or have we perhaps taken this good thing a bit too far in our world today? Many people who aren’t satisfied with their marriages are simply canceling them and trying a new one. The news has had stories recently about some people who aren’t satisfied with their lives and so simply one day leave – without even telling their families! – and start over somewhere else. Or people are even turning to death if they’re not satisfied with life – abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide.

Satisfaction guaranteed. People are now even applying this standard to God. If they’re not satisfied with God, they’ll now simply try another one. And so if the Christian God is not doing so well at running the world, there’s the Muslim god; or you can try the Buddhist god; or even nowadays, you can believe in whatever god you would like to have, made up of bits and pieces from all the others. One to your liking. One made to your satisfaction. For, it seems, with things, and your life, and even your god, you have the right to satisfaction. **Satisfaction guaranteed.**

A good idea, now running amok in our world today.

Which brings us to Thomas. He wasn’t satisfied. He wasn’t satisfied with the testimony given to him by the other disciples that Jesus was alive. He will not believe. **Unless** he gets satisfaction from Jesus Himself. Unless he gets to feel the nail holes and the spear hole. Unless he gets to see for Himself. Unless he gets to run his fingers over Jesus’

body like a blind man with a Braille book – *“I will never believe.”* Thomas, the first post-modern disciple. He wants satisfaction guaranteed. He wants God to do what he wants him to do, just like so many people today.

And then God showed up! And suddenly, Thomas is singing a different tune! *“My Lord and my God!”* he cries. For it’s easy to talk about someone, and criticize someone, and accuse someone when they’re not there. But once they show up, it’s a whole different game! And it was for Thomas. **For once Jesus showed up, Thomas realized that whether or not he was satisfied with God was really irrelevant. What was then important was whether God was satisfied with him!** For he knew what he had said; he knew his demands; he knew his unbelief; he knew how far short he fell; he knew he had mouthed off; he knew his sin. What would the God of life and death think? What would He do? What would He say? Would He demand satisfaction?

And what about you and me? Are you, or have you been, dissatisfied with God? Is He not running the world to your liking? We really could have done without the tsunamis and mud slides, you know God! And how come He didn’t save Terry Schiavo? . . . And what about your life? Got a few changes you’d like for your satisfaction? . . . Why, it doesn’t even seem as if God is running His own Church very well! What with all the different denominations, clergy scandals, declining memberships, and our own Synod pulling itself apart! Got a list of improvements for God? Be honest – we all do.

So what if God showed up here this morning? What would you say? Would you give Him your list? Or do you see that whether or not you are satisfied with God really doesn’t matter!! **More important – infinitely more important – is what would God think of you?** Would He be satisfied with you? Or would He demand satisfaction? For your rebellion, for your sin, for your folly in questioning Him and His ways? When He comes, what will the God of life and death think of you?

Well, what did Jesus do, that night, in the upper room? When He came, He said to His disciples, *“Peace be with you.”* He doesn’t chastise them for being afraid, for running away when He was arrested, or for not believing the women when they said He had risen. He doesn’t criticize Peter and say, *“See I told you that you would deny me!”* He doesn’t say to Thomas what an awful, unworthy disciple he is. He doesn’t tell them how disappointed He is in them for letting Him down. He doesn’t bring any of that up, and He never does! It’s as if all of this unbelief and doubting and fear and confusion never happened at all. It seems as if Jesus is just happy to be with His disciples, and give them peace. Peace of mind, peace of conscience, and peace of heart. The peace that they need.

For, in fact, that is the very reason He is there. That is what it means that Jesus is there.

For the resurrection of Jesus from the dead means **satisfaction guaranteed**. It means that God is satisfied with us. It means that the satisfaction demanded by God for our sin and rebellion and our mutinous thoughts, words, and deeds has been paid in full by Jesus on the cross. It means that our sins are forgiven. It means that when God now comes to us and looks at us, He sees not a bunch of people to judge, whether or not we have lived up to His standards (which is good because we haven't!) – He now sees His children who He is happy to be with. Who He has come to bring *peace* to. Who He has come to bring *life* to. And so Jesus now comes to say to Peter and Thomas and you and me: God is satisfied with you. I am the guarantee! I did it. That's why I died. That's why I went willingly. That's why I didn't fight back, or let you fight back. That's why I didn't jump down from the cross. That's why I came. Don't feel guilty. God is not going to cancel you, or trade you in, or send you back, or leave you. Your sins are forgiven, and they are gone! Your satisfaction, redemption, salvation, is guaranteed! And that's a good thing, isn't it!

Now while it may be hard to believe that God is satisfied with you (for we know how unsatisfactory we are! And that we could never make ourselves satisfactory, no matter how hard we try!) – He is! For in Christ, you are declared good. You are declared not guilty. You are declared to be a child of God, and at peace with your Heavenly Father. And that peace is exactly what we need. To know that God's satisfaction with us is guaranteed. And that's a good thing, isn't it!

And so as Jesus came to His disciples in that upper room, so He comes to us today. And as He comes to us today in His body and blood in Holy Communion, I will say to you "*The peace of the Lord be with you always.*" And it is this peace of which we speak. The peace that He brings. The peace of sins forgiven. It is yours. Take eat, take drink. **God's satisfaction guaranteed.**

And this is the peace of which I speak at the beginning of our Divine Service here every week, as I stand before you and declare: "*In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.*" That is not my forgiveness that you receive, but God's. For this is the peace that Jesus commissioned His apostles to give. His peace. The peace of sins forgiven. "*As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. . . . If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven.*" And so this peace is for you. It is what the Church is all about. **God's satisfaction guaranteed.**

And as we leave this place, we leave with His peace, with His blessing – not His *judgment* – upon us. We know that in Christ, our Father is satisfied with us, and we can now live. Live a new life. Not the same old life, in judgment of God, not satisfied with how things are going – but a new life. For as we heard in the Epistle, we have been

“born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Born again, to a new life, not without troubles or problems, but knowing that the troubles and problems that we face, the challenges that come up against us, and the struggles that shake us, are not arbitrary and do not come because God is being unfair and unreasonable! But, as we heard, they are rather for our good. To test us, and try us, and make us stronger. They are necessary to drive us to a greater reliance on Him – not demanding satisfaction from Him, but knowing that He has given His satisfaction to us. And that just as He did not abandon His Son to the grave, so He will not abandon us to any trouble in this world. For we have been raised with Christ to a new life. We have been raised with Christ in the forgiveness of our sins. **Our Father is satisfied with us – guaranteed!** And so we need not worry, we need not fear. We can live at peace, with God and with one another, *“bringing forth the fruits of Christ’s resurrection in our lives.”*
(Collect of the day)

So while there are always going to be folks in this world who are not satisfied with God – including sometimes you and me! – today we heard the answer to a far greater question; one that matters a whole lot more: is God satisfied with me? And we see the answer in the empty tomb: **yes!** For Christ is risen, and our sins are gone. Christ is risen, and we have peace. Christ is risen, and God’s **satisfaction** is **guaranteed**. And that’s a good thing, isn’t it!

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.