

Sermon 2007 Easter 3
Text: Revelation 5:8-14
Theme: "The Earth is Full of Goodness"

The Sundays of the Easter season are wonderful times in the Church year because we celebrate literally a week of Easters, 7 Sundays of Easter. Every Sunday is full of Resurrection hope and Resurrection promise. Last week we celebrated Quasimodogeniti Sunday, and you might remember that Quasimodogeniti means "as newborn infants," and Peter was encouraging all of us in the Introit to hunger for God's Word and Sacraments like a baby hungers for milk so that we can grow into the salvation Christ has won for us. It is a huge thing to be God's chosen people and we all have some growing to do.

This week, we celebrate Misericordias Domini Sunday. And *misericordias domini* means "goodness of the Lord." It comes from Psalm 33 which says:

"He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." But that goodness is not what always catches our attention is it? In fact, I'm not sure that many people believe that the earth is full of goodness. There is an awful lot of badness in the world.

We have all those kids shot in Virginia for no real reason. We have genocide happening in Darfur. We have diseases and stresses and all manner of irritation in our own lives. We have the idiotic media that assails us daily with more reports on name calling shock-jocks and paternity tests for a dead porn star's baby. Sometimes it is very hard to find any goodness of which this earth is supposed to be full.

But our vision is too narrow. We see just a tiny fraction of what is there. That is why we pray and sing what we pray and sing just before we receive the Lord's Supper.

"Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"

Co-existing with us in this world of porn stars, shock-jocks and homicidal maniacs is the whole company of heaven. That is the joy that Misericordias Domini Sunday brings to us. That is

the message that St. John delivers to us through his revelation. John was exiled to an island off the coast of Greece because of his faith. He surely worried about and wondered about his congregations that he had served as Pastor in Ephesus and other places. He surely wondered if it had all been for nothing. Was all their sacrifice useless? His best friend had been crucified. All his brother apostles had been martyred one way or another. And now he, the last apostle had been sent to an island to die by himself. I bet the world did not seem very full of goodness to John.

So God sent him a vision. Revelation is like skipping ahead to the last chapter of a novel or fast forwarding through the boring scenes to get to the action. In Revelation, we learn how it all turns out. Is there badness in the world? Of course there is. The world is corrupted by sin. It's like a mirror that has been shattered into a thousand pieces and glued back together with Elmer's glue. It would still be a mirror, but not very functional for use. As long as you and I live in this broken world, there is going to be sickness, mental illness, death and destruction of all sorts.

Don't be surprised by the bad stuff in the world and in your lives. Many try and tell you that it's not really there. Some try to convince you that if you were better people it wouldn't come to you. Most believe that it can't happen to them – until it does. And, at some level, almost all of us try to find someone to blame when it happens. But nevertheless, the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord – *misericordias domini*! The earth is corrupted by sin but sin will be taken away! That's what Revelation tells us! At the end of this adventure, we will sing a **NEW SONG!**

The song we sing today is sometimes joyful and sometimes sad but our job right now is not to be happy. God intervenes into the broken world from time to time to give us little oases of joy and happiness, but our job is to proclaim with our whole lives, the promise that we hear in Revelation. Revelation promises us that regardless of how pleasant or unpleasant our song is today, that the **NEW SONG** we will sing will be complete, satisfying every hope and dream we ever had. Then we will come into our

kingdom and reigns as the crown of creation the way we were intended to from the very beginning.

So, today, you, like most people, are probably struggling with some sadness. Maybe it is some personal sadness in your own life, or maybe it is a more generic sadness for the lives of others in the world. Maybe you feel helpless like John did; exiled on an island while his people were being persecuted for their faith. And maybe, to you, the earth does not seem very full of the Lord's goodness. And maybe you are tempted to try to find someone to blame, even if it's yourself, for everything that is wrong...but don't bother...the mirror is broken and it will not be fixed until it is restored by God and the WHOLE universe will be full of the Lord's goodness again.

Knowing that won't take away your hurt or your sadness right now, but it will give you hope. Hope because you know that our NEW SONG is coming and hope because this family is in this together and you are never alone. Your hurt is my hurt and your joy is my joy, but you are not just being supported by me, but by angels and archangels and the ***whole company of***

heaven. Our vision is too narrow. The Church is a big place, full of everyone who has faith in Christ, both those that walk on the earth today and all those who have gone before and when we gather as a family around the altar to receive the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith, we are gathered with all of them as well! Millions and millions gathered all around you already singing the NEW SONG, lifting you up and reminding you that the earth really is full of the Lord's goodness. It is just that our broken mirror has trouble reflecting it until the day of resurrection when we will join that whole host of heaven and sadness will no longer be possible for us. AMEN.