***The Eternal 8th Day of the New Creation***

**Creation Day 8 – Easter Day**

*(This sermon is an adaptation of a sermon by Rev. Dr. Don Wiley)*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]*

The fact that this day is something very special cannot escape us — even most of the world senses it. Of course, they get it wrong! The World and Satan try to cover up the incredible glory and wonder of this day. They try to hide it under decorations, special treats for children or grandchildren, and gathering together as family. There is something special today — we can feel it – we see it all around us, we smell it in the air, and we hear it in the music and *The Easter Proclamation: Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Today has an incredibly special name, it is ***The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord***. Today is one of the High Feasts of the Christian Year. Indeed, it is the oldest and Highest Feast of the whole year, for it is the culmination of our Lord’s humble Incarnation at Christmas.

Christ’s birth, perfect and holy life, His works of mercy and love, all led to His greatest work, His self-sacrificing work of salvation by the atoning sacrifice of His perfection and holiness upon the cross to purchase our forgiveness.

***Lent*** and ***Holy Week*** — indeed, the whole first portion of the Church year — lead us to this day when we can sigh with relief and say, “The sacrifice was accepted, the victory of the cross is proclaimed in the open-throated roar of the empty tomb.”

Everything in the Church Year leads up to and points to this day. Everything after this day in the church year revolves around, and has its beginning and source in this day.

We do not sit in the sackcloth and ashes of sorrow and repentance during Lent only to see our Lord Jesus Christ suffer at the hands of sinners, be crucified on Holy Friday, and **remain** in the tomb. Sackcloth and ashes are our rightful attire, for we are all sinners. We were taken from the dust, and to it we shall all return, just as Ash Wednesday reminded us as the very beginning of Lent.

But if that is all there is, then we are to be most pitied. If that’s all there is — a crucified and forever dead Christ — then we would not know whether Jesus’ work on the Cross accomplished anything before the righteous Father, or not. Was Christ truly the beloved Son in Whom the Father is well-pleased. And personally, it would bring doubt about whether or not we have any forgiveness before God.

In fact, without the Resurrection, I personally doubt that anybody who have remembered the guy who died between two thieves on the stony hill outside Jerusalem that one Passover Friday some 2100 years ago.

Indeed, as St. Paul says in the Epistle we heard at the sunrise service: ***If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile*** ***you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*** (1 Cor. 15:17-18) Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit is saying that if Christ is not risen, then faith is worthless and useless— and that those who died believing in Christ as their Lord and Savior expecting and waiting to be raised again to life at His return – are truly going to be disappointed.) As an ancient Easter Hymn puts it this way:

*All our hopes were ended / Had Jesus not ascended*

*From the grave triumphantly / Our never-ending life to be. / Alleluia.*

But Christ **did** ascend from the grave. Christ **did** rise from death to life. And 40 days later, Christ ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, interceding on our behalf.

The Son of God is **not** dead, but alive – forever. Just as the angel told the women: *Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.* *But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”* (Mk. 16:6-7)

Throughout Lent and Holy Weekwe have been hearing about God’s work of creation and our Savior’s Holy Week work of re-creation. On Good Friday we heard how our Lord Jesus Christ — the Son of Man and the Second Adam — lived and died the truly human life for us and for our salvation.

Where man had failed miserably, Adam and Eve, the first human – and all of us conceived and born in the natural way since them — where we have failed by disobeying God’s commands, falling into great wickedness, engulfed in sin, destined to death, Christ our Lord has succeeded. He did not succeed for Himself, but for us and for our eternal salvation.

On the seventh day God rested from His creative work. This pointed forward to Christ’s resting from all His work of re-creation on the seventh day in the tomb. God had rested on the seventh day, pointing forward to the greater rest of Christ, after His greater work of re-Creation. Our Lord’s work of salvation was finished after that sixth day of Holy Week, and He rested from His work, in the tomb.

Now He calls you to rest in His completed work of redemption, saying: ***Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*** (Mt 11:28–29)

Simply cast all your cares and yourself upon Him and His righteousness. Rest from trying to work out your own salvation — you can never do it. In fact, you will never do enough. You will never do it perfectly. You will never do it with sufficient faith and love in your heart every moment of every day. You simply cannot work out your own salvation.

Thankfully, you do not have to, Christ has done it all for you. His resurrection is the proof and assurance that It is finished – once-and-for-all – once for all people. The Father has sacrificed His only-begotten Son. God has provided for Himself the Lamb of our salvation, Who has taken away the sin of the world, Who has taken away your sin and mine.

Just as Christ our Lord rose from death and the grave on that first day of the week — having conquered sin, death, devil, and hell for us — a new day dawned ***The Eternal 8th Day of the New Creation***. That is how the early Church soon came to understand what Christ had done.

The Son of God has done something new. He has re-created the world! He has reconciled it, restored it, and renewed it. Everyone who is founded in Christ by Baptism and faith is part of that reconciled – restored – renewed Creation. St. Paul declares it this way: ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*** (2 Cor 5:17)

It is not your working that matters. It is not how hard you try. It is not how often you are in Church—though surely the members of Christ’s body would desire and long to be where Christ our Head is ever-present with His Gospel-Word and Sacraments, for those are the means by which His merciful love and forgiveness is delivered to us.

But is not about our works and deeds, that is why Galatians declares: ***God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*** (Gal 6:14–15) In other words, it is not your keeping of the ritual and moral Law of the Old & New Testaments – nor is it your freedom from the Law in the Gospel which avails before God the Father.

You are to boast about the fact that in Christ you are made ***a new creation*** … ***the old man*** — your sinful flesh — ***which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*** must be put off through Baptism in repentance unto faith. You must ***be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*** (Eph 4:22)

This is not your doing. It happens by God’s work through the water that is joined to the Word of Christ. It happens by the Holy Spirit Who comes to you and drowns your sinful flesh in the waters of Holy Baptism, and raises you up again to newness of life. In Holy Baptism you are joined to Christ’s death and resurrection, Who daily kills with the Law and makes alive with the Gospel – repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

And on the day you were baptized, on the day that God created a living faith in you, on that day, you entered The Eternal 8th Day of the New Creation. That Day that shall never end. Joined to Christ and His work and death and resurrection, you already have eternal life. It is just as Christ Himself says: ***Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in Me has eternal life*** (Jn 6:47) — present and ongoing ***eternal life***.

It is for that reason that most Baptismal Fonts have 8 sides. For joined to Christ’s death and resurrection by Baptism, the believer is a new creature, a new creation, and has already passed from death to true and eternal life. This is how we are brought into ***The Eternal 8th Day of the New Creation***.

That is why it is written in the third chapter of Colossians, ***since you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is your Life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*** (Col 3:1–4)

In the name of Jesus. Amen.