

April 4, 2021
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Milan, WI
St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Edgar, WI

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Text: Mark 16:1-8

In the Name of the Father and the ✠ Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

He is Risen!

Do not be alarmed. The world as you know it has changed. The fundamental laws of the universe have been superseded by God Almighty. What you have been told your whole life was certain is not as inevitable as we were led to believe. Death and taxes are not the two unavoidable constants in the universe. Death has been defeated by Christ Jesus our Lord! Taxes, on the other hand, can be defeated by any well-paid accountant.

On that Sunday morning long ago, the Mary's and Salome walked to the borrowed tomb to finish the burial preparation of their beloved friend and teacher, Jesus. They carried spices, ointments and heavy hearts. Their master had been buried hastily on Friday as the sun was setting, so there was no time for the full, respectful cleaning and anointing of their dear friend. In fact, everything about the last week had been a blur. First Jesus was hailed as a king when He rode into Jerusalem. That was strange, because He never claimed to be a king. Then the Passover approached and that's when things went south. It turned out that Judas had betrayed Jesus, the same Judas they had known all these years, whom they had learned with and shared meals with. The last thing they knew, their Teacher was going to celebrate the Passover with the Twelve, a little private affair in the upper room of a guest house. And that same night He was arrested and beaten and dragged before a kangaroo court in the Sanhedrin. Then He was hauled off before Pilate where He beaten and whipped and humiliated. In less than 24 hours Jesus went from freedom to cruel execution with the government's stamp of approval. They were still in shock.

So on the third day, after the high Sabbath of the Passover was over, these faithful ladies walked to the tomb to do the unpleasant task that no one else wanted to do. It is hard enough to lose a friend or loved one. How much harder must it be to prepare the body of that loved one for burial, a body that was so horribly abused? Like countless women before them, they took on the burden of providing that final tender care out of respect and love. They went to the tomb expecting to fulfill this task in quietness and anonymity. Except... the world they woke up to that morning was not the same world they went to bed in. In the wee hours of the morning, the universe changed. Jesus, dead in the tomb three days, was no longer dead. The angel awaiting them at the tomb told them, "**Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen.**" (v.6) How could they not be alarmed? When did the world stop making sense? What the angel was saying was... well... it was unbelievable. They were astonished and, yes, they were afraid. What does this mean?

Do not be alarmed. Everything you think you know about God has changed. God has not changed, mind you. But what you have always been told has been proven to be incomplete, a partial truth only. God is not as angry as you have been told. He does not seek your death, nor the death of any sinner. He is not uninterested in our lives, in our sorrows and heartaches and pains. In fact, He is so concerned about our day-to-day lives that He lived one Himself. From the first beating of His heart in the womb six weeks after the miraculous conception to the last beating of His heart upon the cross thirty years later, Jesus lived a day-to-day life. He knows what you are going through. He understands what we're up against, the struggles, the temptations, the woes. But He didn't just live like us, He lived the way we are supposed to live: Loving God the Father without doubt or distraction. Loving others, even His enemies, without reservation. He was the first fully human person since Adam and Eve, since He alone lived the way God always intended us to live. Not as selfish individuals. But as caring members of the same human family.

Then He did something amazing, unheard of, unthinkable: He paid for all of mankind's sins. He didn't do this by casually crossing a number off a ledger: That's the kind of funny math that Congress does, not God who is truthful and just. No, He paid for your sins the only way they could be paid for: With His own life. He has atoned for both the inherited sin of Adam and Eve and the actual sins that you and I are guilty of. In paying for all of our trespasses, Jesus has silenced the lying voice of Satan, who tried for millennia to accuse us before God. *They're not good enough, he'd say. They don't deserve redemption, he'd sneer.* But God, in His infinite mercy said, "No they don't deserve it. And I shall save them anyway." Thus His Son took upon Himself the task of rescuing us from the devil and the consequences of our inborn rebellion. Death was only a temporary answer to sin. We couldn't be allowed to live forever in sinful rebellion like the fallen angels did. Death was the merciful punishment, but it was never meant to be the permanent. God has always planned to fix it, fix us, fix the universe. And that has already begun.

Jesus is alive and well and seated at the right hand of the Father. He was raised from the dead but He never tasted death again. His victory is permanent, His honor eternal. His position of authority means that He is our advocate and defender. The once-for-all sacrifice of His pure blood has sealed a new covenant, a new treaty between God and man. Like the treaties God made with the patriarchs long ago, this one is ratified by His promise. But unlike those old covenants, this one was sealed not with the blood of animals, but by the holy blood of Jesus. Your place before God has been secured and you will one day join our Lord in a new body, a body without pain or defect, a body like His: Incorruptible. Death has been answered with a far better word: Redemption.

Do not be alarmed. Jesus did not leave you. He is here, today, just as He promised, "**Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.**" (Mt 18:20) He did not leave us alone to fend for ourselves. He keeps on giving of Himself even though He has ascended physically to that other dimension we call heaven. It is not as far away as you think. It is so close, in fact, that He comes back often to be with us, with His brothers and sisters, in holy

celebration. We are not just here remembering a past event. We are here celebrating a present reality. Here in the Divine Service, we join the angel hosts in praising Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He set us free and won for us life eternal. And when He comes again, He will remake the cosmos, a divine reboot of heaven and earth, where death will no longer have any place. Never again will a friend have to prepare another friend's body for burial. Never again will another cheek be stained by tears.

Because He has experienced what we go through daily, He knows our trials and weaknesses. To preserve us, to strengthen us, to make us holy, He gives us the Means of Grace: His powerful Word and His life-giving Sacraments. He gives to us again and again because He wants us to live the lives that we were intended to live: Loving and caring for one another, without fear, without weakness, without shame. He wants us to be beacons in the world, carrying forth His light into every dark place. Wherever a single mother weeps alone, wherever a neglected child shivers in the night we shine His light as a beacon of hope. Wherever hatred and violence rule the day, we stand boldly with the peace of God in our hearts, bridging the divisions that separate us. We carry the same message that the angel did to those women at the tomb: **“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen.”** (v.6) That is the news that every heart longs for it, like a thirsty man in the desert. Jesus has changed everything. Death and despair are not the common language of mankind. Forgiveness and love are, and both are available in Christ Jesus.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed. Alleulia!

In His holy and blessed name, Amen.

Rev. Schopp