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The Resurrection of Our Lord
March 31, 2024
Text: Mark 16:1 – 8
Title: Commandment Countdown #1 (based on a sermon from CPR)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. You shall have no other gods. That is the very First Commandment from our Lord God, and in it He forbids you from having anything or anyone be god ahead of Him. The meaning is simple, you are to fear, love, and trust God above all things. Because He wants to be God *for you! For your benefit!* There is no other God beyond the Father, the Son who became the man, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit who shows us the Christ, and there is no other way to truly know our God outside of knowing Jesus.

You had such high hopes in Him. Jesus was everything to you. You followed Him because you believed He was the Messiah, the promised Savior. He did things only God could do. He said words that only God could possibly say. This always amazed you, many times to the point of absolute fear.

You were there when He healed a paralytic and forgave His sins. It amazed everyone. When He stilled the storm, you were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” You were astonished and absolutely amazed when He brought Jairus’s dead daughter back to life, and when He walked on the water you couldn’t believe your eyes. On the mountain, His appearance changed, transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared; you were scared out of your wits. Could He be...? It sure seems like it. He could be.

But then He went and preached a scandalous sermon series about insistently heading up to Jerusalem. He had a fixation on Jerusalem. He was obsessed with getting to the city, even though He knew that it was dangerous. Three times He boldly and audaciously proclaimed that

He would be...handed over to the chief priests and the Pharisees. He'd be arrested, and beat up. He'd be spit upon, and relentlessly mocked and ridiculed! If that wasn't bad enough, He was sure that He would be charged with a capital crime, flogged, and killed. He'd always finish up by saying something about rising on...the third day? Really? You were completely confused by His words. Astonished. Genuinely scared.

But you'd get over it. And you thought that He would too. His fixation on Jerusalem would pass, and He'd come to His senses, or so you thought. After all, these kinds of things aren't supposed to happen – ever – to the Messiah. And Jesus was the real deal. At least, you hoped He was. Especially after all the miraculous things He did and the authoritative sermons He preached! But now He's dead, and buried. What good is a dead and buried Jesus? Can you even trust Him anymore? Can you?

What are you to do? All that's left is to let the ladies who took care of His physical needs during His earthly life do their thing. They looked after Him. They might as well do it one last time. With spices in hand, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome head to the grave to anoint His dead body.

It's strange, and very bizarre when they arrive. The large stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. They decide that they might as well go on in, but they're met with another big surprise. They are alarmed and shocked at the sight of an angel! And before that can even register, the angel speaks to them, "No need to be afraid. I know you expected to see the corpse of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, but *He is risen!* He's not here. See for yourselves. Go on, take a look. This is where they put His body, and it's not here anymore! Now, you go and tell His disciples and especially Peter that He will meet you in Galilee. You'll see Him there just as He told you."

What!?! Can it really be? Risen from the dead!?! Absolutely! Just like He said!
Remember the last part of His Jerusalem fixation? What He said would happen on the third day?
He was right! It's the biggest miracle of all! The Word came straight from His mouth! He said
so! Resurrection! His own body back from the grave! On the third day, just like He said!

Of course, you and the women are visibly shaken. You never expected this to happen!
Seriously, you didn't! I mean, dead is dead, right? Your hearts are pounding. The adrenaline is
flowing. Your minds are racing. Your hands are trembling, and so is the rest of your body. All
your thoughts are jumbled, and you can't think straight at the moment! So all you can do is run
away! You're so afraid of what you've just seen and heard!

But right now I'd better remind you of something else that the angelic preacher in the
tomb told you. After all, sermons are so easily forgotten, in one ear and out the other. He
plainly said, "Go, tell His disciples, and Peter! He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see Him there.
He said so! He promised it!"

But why would Jesus meet *you* in Galilee? All of you are kind of reluctant to go there.
All of you have a conscience that's been nagging at you for the past three days. You and Peter
and the rest denied and renounced Jesus, and some of you even called down curses on yourselves
as you claimed to not even know Him. You deserted Him when you said that you wouldn't.
You left Him shortly after you proclaimed your absolute loyalty to Him. When the time came,
you wouldn't be caught dead hanging around the humiliated, arrested, and condemned Jesus.
What a difficult and dreadful falling away you committed! You wouldn't let Jesus be God *for*
you in His shocking suffering, and His appalling Good Friday sacrificial death! You stayed
away, and had no use for Him! What sin! What treachery! What idolatry! Your own skin
mattered more to you, than your devotion and faith to Him did! You put yourself before God!

And this is why you're so hesitant to go and meet Jesus in Galilee. You're uncertain. After all, what do you expect from Jesus – the Son of God, whom you abandoned and disowned when He needed you the most?! What might He do to you if He's truly risen from the dead! Payback, retribution and a Divine reckoning of the highest order against you for your unfaithful sins against Him, right? I mean you *did* swear that you'd never abandon Him, remember?

No, not hardly. You couldn't be more wrong! Jesus is risen from the tomb! Not to give you what you expect and what you deserve, but to give what you never, ever imagined as a deadbeat, betraying, loser of a sinner. It's amazing what He will give to you. Mind-blowing amazing. Make-your-body-tremble remarkable. Melt-your-heart astonishing! He would meet you to greet you not with harsh accusations, but with a comforting and grace-filled, "Peace be with you!"

And He had more for you. So much more! He will tell you the best news that you could ever hear as a sinner, and it's this, "I Am God *For You!* I am not your enemy. I am not against you. I'm not here as a God of vengeance, but I am God for you in this way; I died for you, Peter, and for the rest of my disciples who come after you twelve, and who follow me for the rest of time. I took all your sin. I buried it in the black hole of my tomb, and I left it there forever. It is no more. I forgive you, and I don't count your sin against you at all."

Forgiveness! It's what His rising from the tomb is all about. His Divine forgiveness is won for you and provided to you! He meets you in the Sacrament today and every day it's celebrated to come to you as God *for you!* His crucified and risen body and blood He gives to you with the bread and wine, and with the promise that you are forgiven! "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," He says those joyous words, His Holy Words, to you.

The fruit, the benefits of such divine Good Friday and Easter forgiveness are the resurrection of your own body and life everlasting! His complete devotion to His Heavenly Father means that Jesus has kept the First Commandment and every other Commandment that we've meditated on over the past several weeks and He did it all for you. His perfection is applied to your account, and you owe nothing more for your sins. He has made you His own, and He has given you the faith to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. He has placed in you the faith to keep the promise that you made to remain faithful to Him even to the point of death.

Because Jesus rose from the tomb, His Good Friday death was not in vain, and neither is any death of any faithful Christian. His death truly counts for you! You are forgiven, and since He forgives you, then you will also be raised on the Last Day from the grave. He will not leave you there to rot forever. You are precious to Him. You are valuable to Him. He paid the ultimate price for you. Jesus is God *for you*, and as you believe, so you have been given because He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.