

Easter
April 9, 2023
“Jesus tomb for our tomb”
(Matthew 28:5-7)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Easter Sunday is from Matthew 28:5-7

“5 But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

Here ends our text.

Throughout this Lenten season we have been following the theme of Biblical substitutes. A ram was sacrificed for Isaac so that the promised line of the Savior would continue through him. The paschal lamb was substituted for the first born when the Israelites were in Egypt. The Lamb’s blood protected the firstborn from death. And we know that the Jesus’ blood sacrificed on the cross protects us from eternal death. He is the True Passover Lamb for the sins of all people. On Friday, we heard that Barabbas was given freedom in a paschal pardon while Jesus Himself was crucified. But by His death on the cross, He became the substitute for the eternal freedom of all people. We light the Paschal candle today that Jesus lives!

Which brings us to our final Biblical substitute theme today. “Jesus’ tomb for our tomb.” Today we will hear how Jesus’ tomb of resurrection has been substituted for all people’s tombs of death and despair. And that your tomb of death has become your tomb of victory through your faith in Jesus!

But on that first Easter morn, there was much sadness and weeping at Jesus’ tomb and in the home where the disciples were staying. We know the story well to whom Jesus first appeared, don’t we? Mary Magdalene. Mary went with other women to the tomb to finish Jesus’ burial preparations. However, when she saw the stone had been moved, she quickly assumed that Jesus body had been taken. And so she ran to Simon Peter and told him this. She then made her way back to Jesus’ tomb. What comfort was there at the tomb for Mary? None. She had not heard the angels good news that the other women

heard that Jesus had risen. Instead, she stood outside the tomb weeping. For her, Jesus' tomb was still a tomb of sadness.

There is always profound sadness at the burial site of a loved one as we too have experienced. Two weeks ago in the Gospel reading, we read how Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. At death, there is separation, emptiness, only the memories of a loved one. One day the person that we loved spending time with is with us and the next, that person is no longer with us but in a tomb. The sadness of death is most profound when the casket is covered with the earth. Dust to dust. So, we began this Lenten season with ashes on our foreheads as a reminder that one day each of us will also return to the earth from which we were formed, as punishment for our sins.

And for Mary and also the disciples in the locked room, it seemed that Jesus was no different. He died. He had saved others – even raised Lazarus from the dead – but He ultimately succumbed to His crucifixion and was placed in a tomb just like any other person who has died.

Why would we want to exchange our tomb for Jesus' tomb? These were not Mary's thoughts. She only wanted to find the body of Jesus and put it back in His own tomb.

On Friday night we read the prophecy from Isaiah 53:

**“He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. 9 And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.**

His grave was with the wicked – the wicked of this world – you and me included. One grave is no different than another. Sure, one tomb can be made a little more fancy than another. One can spend more money on a bigger tombstone, a nicer casket, a mausoleum maybe instead of pauper's grave. But whatever size or shape a tomb is, it is the stark reminder that the wages of sin is death. We know that Jesus was placed in a rich man's tomb because He had done no violence. He was sinless and unjustly killed, but dead nonetheless. Of course, there have been nicer tombs than Jesus' tomb if you really wanted something better. You could make yourself a nice pyramid like the Egyptians.

But what is desirable about Jesus' tomb is not that it was a little nicer than most, but that 3 days after His death it was no longer a dead man's tomb! But it was the tomb of a living man who no longer was prisoner in the tomb. He had come back to life. In fact, because Jesus had not committed any sin His body did not see decay. And on Holy Saturday He

was alive inside His tomb and descended to hell to proclaim His victory over all evil and judgement to all who had rejected Him.

Would you not want a tomb of life instead of death? Would you not want to have Jesus' tomb of power over death? A tomb which is empty because there is no longer death but life inside?

Jesus spoke Mary Magdalene's name to her at the tomb and immediately the weeping stopped. At the tomb of Jesus, sadness was turned to joy! The other women had left Jesus' tomb with great joy! And Jesus Himself also appeared to them as they returned to the disciples to confirm to them that He was alive!

The good news for all people today is that Jesus' tomb is the tomb of resurrection. And Jesus' resurrection is the pronouncement of God's justification of the entire sinful world! What Jesus endured on the cross, the payment of all the world's sins is verified as true and made known to all at the empty tomb! Listen to Romans 4:25.

Romans 4:25 “who (Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

Jesus was delivered up on the cross for all the world's offenses. It was finished. And yet, this good news was not good news unless the tomb was empty three days later. For Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:

“13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”

If Jesus did not rise from the dead then there is no hope for anyone in any tomb. But Paul says that Jesus was raised for our justification. Jesus' resurrection is the moment that God the Father pronounced the world justified. This is the great substitution which God made not just for some people but for all people. “Our justification” means the justification of the whole human race!

But like Mary, and the weeping disciples behind closed doors, and the downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus, this good news gives no benefit unless it is heard and

believed. Unless the Holy Spirit gives faith through His Word, one's tomb remains a tomb of sadness. You and I take much comfort this day that God has revealed this truth to you through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you since your baptism! Listen to Romans 8:11.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

This means that Jesus' tomb is personally given for your tomb. The same Spirit who raised Jesus will raise our mortal bodies!

And so also we read in 1 Corinthians 15.

"20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Listen to the words again that we sung in our hymn of the day written by Paul Gerhardt.

*"Awake, my heart, with gladness, See what today is done;
Now, after gloom and sadness, Comes forth the glorious sun.
My Savior there was laid Where our bed must be made
When to the realms of light Our spirit wings its flight."*

Look what today is done! Where our Savior was laid along where our bed must be made there is no gloom or sadness. For Jesus lives and to the realms of His eternal light in heaven our spirit wings its flight at the moment of our death.

And this is true because of what verse 2 proclaims.

*The foe in triumph shouted When Christ lay in the tomb;
But lo, he now is routed, his boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free; In glorious victory
He who is strong to save Has triumphed o'er the grave.*

The devil shouted in triumph when Jesus was laid in the tomb, but now he's routed and his boast is turned to gloom! And because this is true, this sight that we behold of the empty tomb, we can be assured that our eternal hope is secure.

So we can sing in verse 3 these words of faith.

*This is a sight that gladdens— What peace it doth impart!
Now nothing ever saddens The joy within my heart.
No gloom shall ever shake, No foe shall ever take
The hope which God's own Son In love for me has won.*

In 1655 Paul Gerhardt married Anna Maria Berthold. Their first daughter died in infancy, and the family suffered from extreme poverty. In 1657 he became assistant Pastor at St. Nicholas Church in Berlin. Gerhardt and his wife had five more children, but three of them did not live past their first few days. Another son also died, and Anna Maria was seriously ill. at Easter in 1668 his wife died. Gerhard's only surviving family was a six year old son. In 1669

Gerhardt was called to serve as Pastor in Lübben, where he remained until his death. In total Gerhardt wrote 133 hymns (21 of them are in the Lutheran Hymnal). In the midst of suffering much loss, Paul wrote verse 4.

*Now hell, its prince, the devil, Of all their pow'r are shorn;
Now I am safe from evil, And sin I laugh to scorn.
Grim death with all its might Cannot my soul affright;
It is a pow'rless form, Howe'er it rave and storm.*

In the Lutheran church at Lübben, Germany, there hangs a life-size painting of Paul Gerhardt. Beneath it is the inscription, "the theologian tested in Satan's sieve."

With all confidence in Jesus' resurrection Paul wrote verse 7 which we sang also with confidence of our glorious resurrection.

*He brings me to the portal That leads to bliss untold,
Whereon this rhyme immortal Is found in script of gold:
"Who there My cross has shared Finds here a crown prepared;
Who there with Me has died Shall here be glorified."*

Yes, Christ's tomb of resurrection is ours through faith in Him and so also is our eternal glory! All glory be to God! **Amen.**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)