

# Sermon for Easter Sunday

**Date:** April 21, 2019

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 65:17-25

**Epistle Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 24:1-12

**Sermon Text:** 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

**Sermon Title:** The Last Enemy



## Hymns:

LSB 459 – Christ Is Arisen

LSB 467 – Awake, My Heart, with Gladness

LSB 457 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today

LSB 475 – Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing

LSB 461 – I Know That My Redeemer Lives

## Distribution:

LSB 465 – Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds

LSB 477 – Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin  
Twitter.com/@StJohnsAustinMN  
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau  
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



## **Text: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26**

If Christ is our hope in this life only, we deserve more pity than any other people, but now Christ has come back from the dead. He is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Since a man brought death, a man also brought life back from death. As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ. This will happen to each person in his own turn. Christ is the first, then at his coming, those who belong to him will be made alive. Then the end will come. Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father as he destroys every ruler, authority, and power. Christ must rule until God has put every enemy under his control. The last enemy he will destroy is death.

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Grace to you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Epistle<sup>1</sup> reading for today we heard these words, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”<sup>2</sup> In Genesis 2:17 we hear these words:

“You must never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because when you eat from it, you will certainly die.”



The first enemy we encounter after sin is death. When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge they died to God that day, right at that moment. Death had them and would never let them go. Now however Christ has us. He has paid the price to purchase us, slaves of Satan. He has paid the ransom for us. He has defeated sin, defeated the power of the devil. He has defeated death. When the Father declared to Satan, “He will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel”<sup>3</sup> He was making a promise. That promise was: Death will not rule forever.

Today is Easter. A day when we celebrate that victory. The victory is won. It was won on Good Friday, and now on Easter Sunday Jesus shows Himself as risen from the dead proclaiming to all Creation that salvation has come to God’s children. It is because He rose on this day to confirm His victory that we, the Christian Church, celebrate Easter with Him and all the company of Heaven on this Sunday morning.

A lot has transpired since that day so long ago when we, the human race, died. There were times when God thought it might be better to wipe out all life and start over.<sup>4</sup> We have not always been very thankful for the promise that He gave to save us. A lot of rebellion. A lot of disobedience. A lot of disbelief. Still through it all God’s promise remained. He kept us safe. Through the thousands of years He made certain that some remained faithful.

Sometimes through very radical means, like the flood. Leaving only Noah and his family. One gets the impression that if God had not acted Noah’s grandchildren would have left the faith, and there would be no one left to save. Other times God’s



1 Epistle is a Greek word that means letter. The Epistle reading is a reading from one of the New Testament letters.

2 1 Corinthians 15:26

3 Genesis 3:15

4 Genesis 6:13

work was more subtle, like when He called Abraham whose family worshiped the moon.<sup>5</sup>

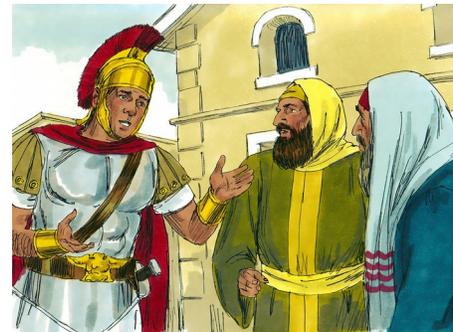


When His chosen people were in danger He saved them with incredible and awesome power. Who can forget the plagues of Egypt,<sup>6</sup> and the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>7</sup> God's power is present to save His people. Of course, they were not always faithful. There were times when God allowed them to be defeated by: Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Canaan, Syria, and others. While they were suffering however God kept a careful watch. Their punishment was intended to bring them back not to wipe them out.

Still, it would appear that all was about to be lost. By the time we get to the end of the Old Testament the prophets that God sends have a message of desperation. They are trying to teach the people, but the people will not hear. Near the end God even goes so far as to ask His people to test Him like He did in the last book of the Old Testament. We read in Malachi 3:10 God's desperate words concerning true worship of Him alone.

“Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I won't open the windows of heaven for you and flood you with blessings.”<sup>8</sup>

So was God's endless effort to bring His promise to all of us, but the people still rebelled. Once again God allowed punishment to come. Chaos filled their lives for another 450 years before God would send another prophet. By that time a new empire would have defeated and enslaved God's people. This time an empire called Rome. The Roman army was powerful and vast. Israel could never defeat them.

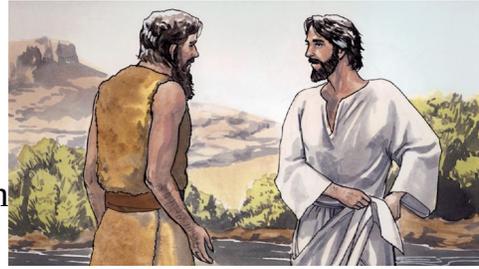


In this time of despair God sent another prophet. The last prophet to foretell of the coming Messiah. His name was John. We know him as John the Baptist. John was born miraculously,<sup>9</sup> and for a very special task. You see God's promise was about to be fulfilled. The reason for all of God's work and effort was about to be made clear. John's job was to get the people ready. To prepare the way of the Lord.

5 Joshua 24:2  
6 Exodus chapters 7-9  
7 Exodus 14:13-ff  
8 Malachi 3:10  
9 Luke 1:5-25

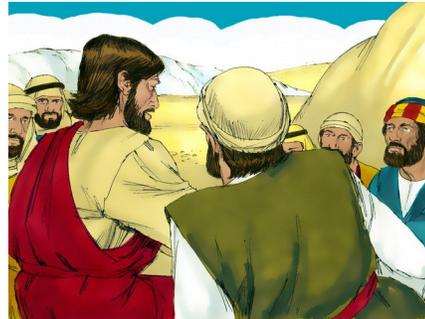
John did his work faithfully, and thousands of people heard his words and believed. While they waited, waited for Messiah to come.

Then on one bright and glorious day John spoke. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.<sup>10</sup>” With those words John’s ministry began to end, and Jesus ministry began to grow. From that day Jesus – Messiah – would begin to teach. He would teach the people that salvation had come. Emanuel – God With Us – was with us, walking among us. He taught the people that He would save all of them; free all of them. This was it! The promise of so long ago now walked among us. Surly the people rejoiced.



Sadly, they didn’t. Although many followed Jesus, very, very, few really understood. In fact you’d be hard pressed to find anyone at all. Even the twelve disciples didn’t really get it, but that was the point. Jesus hid it from them on purpose.<sup>11</sup>

You see He had a job to do. That job was saving you, and He didn’t want them getting in the way. If they had really understood who He was, and why He was there, they would have done everything, anything, to stop Him. They would have given their very lives to protect Him. Jesus didn’t come to be protected but to protect. He didn’t come to be served but to serve. He came to save us.



As the end drew near Jesus teaching became more desperate. That same desperation we saw in the Father throughout the Old Testament we now see in Jesus His Son in the Gospels. That is because Jesus’ goal is the same as the Father’s goal. To save all people.<sup>12</sup>



Then came that triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Then the Lord’s Supper. Then to the garden of Gethsemane. Then the arrest. Then the illegal trial. Then the

10 John 1:29

11 Luke 18:31-34

12 1 timothy 2:4

execution by crucifixion. Then all appeared lost. At the cross everyone abandoned Him, except for a very few. It must have been horrible to watch. His body ripped and torn, beaten and bruised so badly He didn't look human.<sup>13</sup> Their faith tested to its limits when He died.

So they buried Him. Hope was lost. Who would save them now? His disciples, students and friends scattered with no where to turn. Even their "Church" was gone. It was their "Church" that killed Him. Where could they turn now? Jesus died on Friday and Saturday was their "Church" day. It was a high holy day. It was Passover Sabbath. You have to wonder if they even went to church that week. It must have been a terrible and horrible weekend for them. If that were the end it would be a terrible end in deed, but that is not the end.



Paul wrote:

If Christ is our hope in this life only,  
we deserve more pity than any other people.<sup>14</sup>

...but this is not the end. Which is why Paul can continue:

...but now Christ has come back from the dead. He is the very first person of those who have died [*eternally*] to come back to life [*eternally*].

Since a man [*Adam*] brought death, a man [*Jesus*] also brought life back from death. As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.<sup>15</sup>



Today is Easter! A day when we celebrate that victory. The final enemy Death, has been defeated. The war is over. The victory is ours! Eternal life is the blessed gift that ancient Promise brings. Physical death in this world is a new birth into the world to come. Like a child must wait for the right time to be born, so we also wait on God's good time for us to be born. Born from this world into a new world where we will see Him, Jesus, face to face.

That is why we praise Him. That is why we sing: Jesus Christ is risen today!

### **LSB 457 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today (V.1)**

Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!  
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!  
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!  
Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Alleluia! Praise be to Jesus! He will shine like the Sun. Like the Sun is shining today through these windows this morning. He will be radiant, triumphant, glorious and majestic. He will be our God, and we will be His people, and nothing will ever harm us or separate us from Him ever again.<sup>16</sup>

Today is Easter!! A day when we celebrate that victory. Which is why throughout the Christian Church, across all peoples and lands, there is an ancient tradition. One will shout:

“Alleluia! Christ is risen!” –  
“He is risen in deed! Alleluia!”  
“Alleluia! Christ is risen!” –  
“He is risen in deed! Alleluia!”  
“Alleluia! Christ is risen!” –  
“He is risen in deed! Alleluia!”<sup>17</sup>”

His is risen indeed! Your salvation is won. Satan is defeated! This is Easter!  
Praise to God for His wondrous might!  
Amen. Amen! Amen!!



<sup>16</sup> Romans 8:38

<sup>17</sup> 'Alleluia' is a Hebrew word that means, 'Praise to the Lord.'