

Sermon for Easter Day

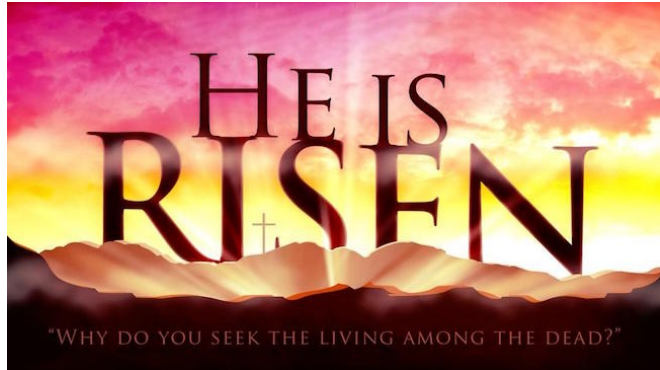
Date: April 4, 2021

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

Old Testament: Isaiah 25:6-9

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Gospel Reading: Mark 16:1-8



Sermon Text: Mark 16:1-8

Sermon Title: What does "Christ is Risen" really mean?

Introit: Psalm 24:7-10; antiphon: Psalm 118:24

Hymns:

- LSB 457 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today
- LSB 461 – I Know that My Redeemer Lives
- LSB 487 – Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain
- LSB 633 – At the Lamb's High Feast we Sing
- LSB 465 – Now All the Vaults of Heaven Resounds

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

Songs:

- Another In The Fire
- Chain Breaker
- Wake Up Sleeper
- Rise up - Lazarus
- The Blessing

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “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.”

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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

Alleluia! Christ is arisen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Some of you have heard that good news for many decades; some could be hearing it for the very first time. Christ is risen. It is the most important sentence in Creation. Without it the Christian faith does not exist.¹ In that sentence is joy, astonishment, wonder, awe, gratitude and relief.

It means Holy Week and the passion, the suffering, of our Lord is over. The hardship is over. The intensity is over. Not just for pastors. I'm not talking about the extra hours of work and extra services. It's all about Jesus.

One never leaves Holy Week the same as you enter it. The Word of God, in both Law and Gospel, accomplishes its work, and leaves the repentant heart changed. That is why we cry "Christ is arisen!" Today means rest for our souls, because the battle is over. "Christ is arisen" means Christ has won. Alleluia! Praise be to God!

The payment for our sins has been made. The seal on our graves has been broken, and the head of our enemy, Satan, has been crushed under the heel of our Brother, Lord, and Savior.² What more is there left to do? Nothing. Jesus has done it all. It is finished.

To the women, there is no need to go with spices to anoint the body, and don't worry about the stone. Christ is arisen! Now we can rest in peace. Easter changes everything.

It is a very special, a very precious, peace when you think back to the other time when everything had changed? There is only one other time that everything was changed. You have to go way back. Back to almost the beginning. That change was not in peace. It was when sin conquered creation. It was the father of lies winning, and God's children dying. When Adam sinned and plunged all of creation into death, eternal death, eternal separation from God. Everything changed.

Work became sweaty toil. Rest was replaced with fear and trial. The peace of paradise became a hardship of pilgrimage. Adam was no longer at home in this world, but a stranger on the earth.

Life itself was changed. Life would now end. There would be: death, tears, sorrow, separation. All of those things that were never part of God's very good

1 (1 Cor 15:14)

2 Genesis 3:15

creation.³ It was the fruit of Adam's corrupt coveting. "You will be like God..." Satan said.

Instead of becoming like God, as Satan had promised, instead of ascending on high, Adam would now descend back from whence he came.

"You are dust,
and to dust you shall return."⁴

Satan would dance on the grave of each one of us. All of us from Adam, to you, and beyond. Everything had changed.

If you've ever read the book, or saw the movie, "The Chronicles of Narnia" Narnia was a world which had been changed. It was Winter. It was always Winter but never Christmas. The "winter of our sins," as we sang in the hymn. Always cold, always death, always fear, with no joy. It would be like always living in Holy Week, but never Easter.

Always betrayal, always denial, always scourging, always blood, always fear, always despairing, always sin, always death. Always working and never resting. Always worrying and never comforted. Always striving and never reaching. Always busy and never done. Until the body and the mind, weary and broken, can take no more. Then death, eternal death, eternal pain. That does sounds very much like our world today, doesn't it?

I stand up here every week, I see people whose lives are abused by sin. People hurting, some more, some less. People saddened by separation. People betrayed and hurt. People struggling under burdens. People confused and worried. People whose bodies are wearing out. People searching for peace and rest, in a world where it is always Holy Week and never Easter. The devil isn't dancing on our graves quite yet, but he is getting his shoes on.

To all of us today, broken and tired, stumbling and struggling; on this morning of the third day since our Lord died, the angel says to us, "Do not be afraid." Alleluia! Christ is arisen! It is Easter!

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.⁵

3 Genesis 1:31
4 Genesis 3:19
5 Psalm 118:24

Did you hear echoes of Genesis there? Do you hear the echoes of creation, before the Fall, when everything was new, and all was “very good?”⁶ Do you remember what Jesus said? “Behold I am making all things new.”⁷

Christ is arisen and He has restored creation. Christ is arisen and has lifted our burdens. Christ is arisen and has buried our sins. Christ is arisen and put our hearts and souls at rest once again. Christ is arisen, and everything is changed. Everything is changed!

It is not a wistful, wishful, “Have a nice day” sort of change. With the coming of Easter, with the resurrection triumph of our Savior, we have truly entered a new day, a new life. The Holy Week of sin is past. Our Savior has fulfilled the Law and has risen to a new day.

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.⁸

This is what the ancient Church liked to call the eighth day. The first day of the complete and new creation. The day of eternal life, that will never end. The day that has broken out of the old cycle of death. The first day of the rest of your life, where there will never again be a Holy Week of sin that never ends.

The world is always Holy Week but never Easter, but because of Jesus, and for those who repent and believe in Him, it is now always Easter! This is why, in the Holy Christian Church, every Sunday is a celebration of Easter.

Christ is arisen. It was Jesus who danced on the devil!⁹ It was Jesus who walked into the basilica of Beelzebub and proclaimed victory! “Christ is arisen” means there is rest, there is peace and there is joy. “Christ is arisen” means everything is changed. Changed, for you.

You probably felt about the same, this morning when you woke up, and you will probably feel the about the same tomorrow. The problems you had in your life yesterday will still be there tomorrow. You feel the same, but you’re not.

You have your own Easter day, when Christ’s Easter became yours. Your own Easter Day of rest and peace, when everything changed for you, when you were given the gift of faith, when you received the payment of Christ’s cross, when the stone on your grave was rolled away, and when you began living your eighth day; the day of your eternal Easter. When was that day for you? When you were Baptized.

6 Genesis 1:31
7 Revelation 21:5
8 Psalm 118:24
9 Genesis 3:15

On that day Jesus made you His own and joined you to Himself, and you rose with Jesus to a new life.¹⁰ On that day you were made a new creation.¹¹ That day was your exodus from exile in sin and death, through the Red Sea waters, and into the Promised Land of Heaven. Your exodus from the “always Holy Week of sin and death” to the joy, peace, and rest of Easter. Because you are Baptized, “Christ is arisen” means you are risen too! That changes everything!

Your resurrection is “already,” but at the same time “not yet.” As a sinful human being you always have one foot in the grave, but as a repentant Christian you have one foot placed firmly on the golden streets of Heaven. One world you are leaving, and one you are entering.

We sometimes get them mixed-up. It is our Holy Baptism that brings us back. Back in repentance, and back to Jesus through the forgiveness of your sin. Back to Easter, to patiently await the time that is coming when we will have both feet firmly planted in Paradise. When, as St. Paul put it, “God will be all in all.”¹²

We are not there yet. I don’t have to tell you that. The trouble in the world, and the trouble in your life can tell you that. Times will come when that one foot we have in the grave will feel so heavy you’ll think we’ll never get it out. (Actually, that’s true.) If it were up to us, and our strength, we’d have both feet in the grave, with no hope and no way out. But it is not up to us!

The women at the tomb discovered that. Jesus has done it all. Just as they had no need to anoint the body or roll away the stone, neither do you. It is Jesus who has anointed you in Holy Baptism, and it is He who will roll away the stone on your tomb on the Last Day. Your body will be raised, and you will be changed. Glorified. Perfect. Just like “in the beginning.” We will once again, and forever, live with our God and Savior.

“Christ is arisen” means Christ has won. It is what we heard the prophet Isaiah proclaim:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts...
will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces...

Sounds like always Easter, does it not? ...but wait, there’s more. On that mountain, where God is swallowing up death, where He is wiping away tears from all faces, where there is His victory, there is also a feast! Not just any feast, but the feast of feasts! What do those who are at rest and peace do? They relax and

10 Romans 6

11 2 Corinthians 5:17

12 1 Corinthians 15:28

celebrate and feast. It is the Lord of hosts who makes this feast for us. Who serves us, in His “always Easter” kingdom. What a day that will be!

When we are reunited with our loved ones who have died in Christ. You need not wait for that day. It is already here! Just as your resurrection is already, and at the same time not yet, and just as you have one foot in the grave and at the same time one foot in Paradise, so also this Holy Feast of our Lord is a heavenly feast and at the same time a feast that is given to us here already.

Here in our “like always Holy Week” lives, here to lift us out of our struggles, offer us the freeing power of confession and the liberating forgiveness of our sins, and set our hearts and minds on things above. It is this Holy Feast we will receive today. The feast at this Sacred Table, the feast of the body and blood of our Lord.

What richer food, what greater drink, could there be than our Lord Himself? What could be of more benefit to us? At this feast is not just you and me and all of us gathered here. It is with all who are in Christ. The angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven. That the joy we will have then, is yours already now.

A little taste of “always Easter” in our “always Holy Week” world. Your Savior knows you need it. He knows what Holy Week is like. Some of you have feasted at this Holy Table for decades; some here will be feasting for the very first time.

What joy is yours! To have our Savior here, feeding us as both the host and the meal. To have our Savior here, for Christ is not dead, but arisen. What a relief!

What a relief in our hectic world. What a relief in our sorrow and pain. What a relief from our sin and failure. What a relief to know that all these things will pass away, never to rise again. When we pass away, when death comes for us, it will be different. We will arise! Because of today.

Christ is arisen, and everything has changed. Christ is arisen, and Christ is arisen means Christ has won. If Christ has won then you have won. If Christ has won, it is Easter. Always Easter. Alleluia!

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

