Sermon for
Easter Dawn

Date: April 17, 2022 (9:00am)
Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Zechariah 12:10–13:1
Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12–14
Gospel Reading: John 19:28–37

Sermon Text: John 19:37
Sermon Title: Return to the Church

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 69:16–21

Hymns:
LSB 457 – Jesus Christ Is Risen Today
LSB 456 – Were You There?
LSB 633 – At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing
LSB 666 – O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe
Break Your Hearts
LSB 822 – Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

Liturgy:
Creative Worship

Return to Church

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KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am

Text: John 19:37

And again another Scripture says, “They will look on Him whom they have pierced.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen.

Why are you here?

That question might be a little blunt, but please know I'm not trying to make you feel uncomfortable. I am asking to nudge you into think about how you came to faith in Jesus Christ. How were you led to become a member of the Church? How were you joined to the community of believers? My hope is to make us all think about the depth of meaning in knowing God has called us to be members of the body Christ, and how He uses us to encourage and support one another as we live in faith.

The sermon series this Lent has focused on God's call to us. Especially His call through the prophet Joel, the call to return to Lord, to turn from our sins, to trust in Jesus and to be saved. (If you missed any of those messages I'd encourage to you head out to 'Sermon Archive' on our website and listen to them.)

The imagery of returning, throughout these messages, has come up again and again, as we looked at the events of Jesus' Passion, Jesus' suffering, examining some of the more egregious sins that were committed. We considered how we transgress God's Commandments in our own lives. Some of it has probably been sobering and maybe a little difficult to hear.

The prophet Joel does not stop there. The rest of Joel's message offers hope and comfort:

> Return to the LORD your God,
> for He is gracious and merciful,
> slow to anger,
> and abounding in steadfast love;
> and He relents over disaster.[1]

We have seen God relent over disaster in sending His own Son into the world. We have been comforted to hear our salvation has been secured by His all-availing sacrifice on the cross.

That sacrifice is front and center on this day, as we gather together, having experienced the Betrayal on Maundy Thursday, the pain and sting of death on Good Friday and awaiting the joy of Easter. The events of Good Friday are the starting point for our message today. The death of Jesus is retold with not many words, but with massive effect. In John's Gospel it reads:

1 Joel 2:13

> When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished,' and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.[2]

We start there because that is the place where everything comes together. On the cross, weighed down with your sin, tortured physically by humankind, and tormented further by the the Father's abandonment, Jesus finally completes His mission. We would do well to pause and reflect on that moment. To pause and ponder what just happened right there. It is that very moment that will set the stage for the call to return we hear today.

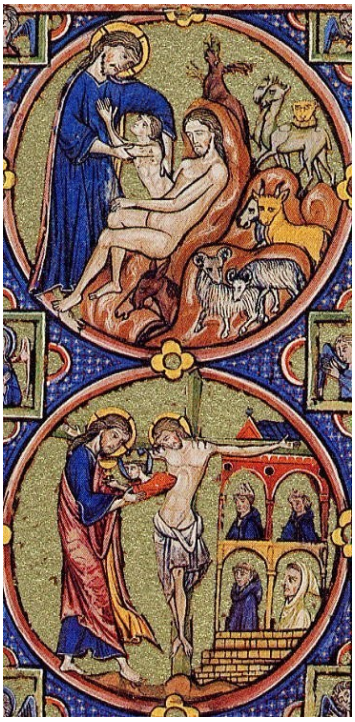
John repeats over and over Jesus did what He did "to fulfill the Scripture.[3]" It was all to fulfill the predictions made in the Old Testament. In those things written about Him hundreds of years before this moment. He was carrying out a plan His Father had laid out before the foundations of the earth were laid,[4] before He said, "Let there be light.[5]" It was a plan put into motion way back in Eden on the very day Adam and Eve sinned.[6] Finally it was coming to fruition. What Satan corrupted Jesus was putting right. It is at this very moment that work was completed. Jesus said, "It is finished.[7]"

Something surprising happened next. The Temple authority, immensely concerned about Torah Law, at least where it concerned the Passover, (not so much about "Thou shall not kill") asked Pilate to break the legs of Jesus and the two criminals. They wanted to speed along the process of death and avoid the bad feng shui[8] of having the bodies still hanging on the cross during the high holy Passover Sabbath. The soldiers setting about their task discovered Jesus was already dead, so they didn't break His legs. Instead a soldier stabbed a spear into His side, and blood and water came pouring out, confirming Christ our Lord is dead.

That wound, our Lord's pierced side, is filled with meaning. That wound brought the whole thing to a crushing end. The apostle John and Mary Jesus' mother looked on devastated. The disciples scattered and had no idea what to do. Their friend and leader was dead. They looked at Jesus, dead on the cross, and they mourned deeply with pain.

2 John 19:30
3 John 19:24,28,36
4 Genesis 1:1-2
5 Genesis 1:3
6 Genesis 3:15
7 John 19:30
8 'Feng shui' *(pronounced Fung Shoo-way)* it a home decorating and design term having to do with appearances and how items in the environment affect people.

The day Jesus died was a dark, dark day. No one quite understood. On that day, a wound was opened in Jesus' side, and blood and water came out. In that harsh event something wonderful happened. A fountain was opened for us. A fountain of blood and water that didn't mean death, but life eternal. A fountain of holy blood and water that would give birth to the very Bride of Christ, the Church. A fountain that would provide everything needed to "wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.[9]" A fountain that would finally, eternally, crush the head of Satan[10] and reconcile us to the Father.



When God created Adam, He resolved early on "it is not good that the man should be alone,[11]" so He set out to make a helper fit for him. He had created all manner of animals and beasts and He brought them to Adam to see what he would name them. None of them was a suitable helpmate. So God put Adam into a deep sleep and did a little surgery, taking a rib from Adam's side and He created a woman: Eve. Adam said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.[12]"

From a wound in Adam's side, the bride of Adam was made for him: a suitable partner. Someone with whom he could be for his whole life. Someone he could love and cherish. Someone with whom he could share joy and companionship.

Today we remember something similar, and it starts with a wound in Jesus' side. Jesus is often referred to as the "Second Adam." From a wound in Jesus' side, the Bride of Christ has been made for Him. A suitable partner. Someone who will be with Him forever. Someone for whom He had already given of Himself. Someone He loves and cherishes. Someone with whom He shares joy and companionship.

We are that Bride. The Holy Christian Church is often called the Bride of Christ. God has called us into the Church, into the community of believers, who make up the very Bride of Christ.[13] That is why you are here! He has called you into this community on purpose, and for a good reason.

As a part of this community you get to serve the Lord and to serve your neighbor. In this community the fullness of Christ dwells, and the Holy Spirit works. In this community you get to encourage and support one another. We get to lift up one another.

9 Revelation 7:14
10 Genesis 3:15
11 Genesis 2:18
12 Genesis 2:23
13 1 Corinthians 12:14

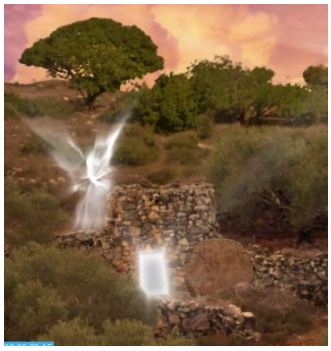
To rejoice with one another in the good times. To weep with one another in the bad times. To teach one another about God and His great love and compassion for us.

As we come together today to look "on Him whom [we] have pierced,[14]" we see the flood of blood and water, and we realize it is:

a fountain opened for all of God's people,
to cleanse us from sin
and uncleanness.[15]"

This fountain gives birth to the Church, and God calls us together into this community for His sake and for ours.

If we were to end there that would be wonderful news. Our Lord gave His life so we could live. We honor those who do such things for our country and our freedom. They are those whom we hold in the highest esteem, and there is where our Lord should be.



…but He is not there.

The angel was the first to point that out. The women came very early in the morning to honor Jesus. To, in accord with their traditions and customs, anoint the body of Jesus with oils and spices. They came to honor Him. They came to perform their duties of honor and respect.

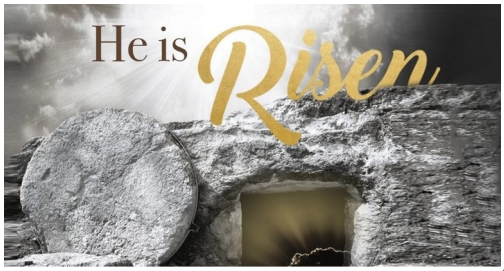
They never finished their task. They never started. They were met by an angel who said, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here,…[16]"

Jesus came to die, for you. He did that, and He was buried in a tomb, but He is not there. He is not there! The tomb is empty and your salvation is secured.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.



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

14 Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37
15 Zechariah 13:1
16 Luke 24:5-6