

Quasi Modo Geniti
78April, Anno Domini 2018
St. John 20:19-31
Pr.. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

So why are the disciples hiding? The women have brought them the joyous Easter news. A couple of them have even been to the tomb themselves and seen that "Nope, Jesus isn't there anymore, just like He said." The darkness of night is creeping back and the disciples return to their old fears as though nothing has changed, even though EVERYTHING has changed. It is amazing how quickly we forget all the wonderful things that follow from Jesus' resurrection. Our sins have been forgiven. Whenever and however our earthly life ends, and it will at some point, whether it's at the hands of the Jews or the Romans, whether cancer consumes our bodies, whether we die suddenly in a tragic accident, or whether we die peacefully at the ripe old age of 95 - we will die, but because Jesus is alive and no longer lying in the tomb we have nothing to fear about death or anything else.

Because Jesus lives, because His holy and precious blood satisfied God's wrath and judgment against sin, your sins can no longer hurt you. You don't have to be afraid of closing your eyes and meeting God. You don't have to wonder what He will think of you. You don't have to constantly worry about whether you have done enough for God to let you into Paradise. You haven't. But Jesus has. He's done more than enough. Peace to you. If we spent our entire lives considering and meditating on everything those three words mean, it wouldn't be enough – because they say it all. Everything we could ever need is found in those words "Peace to you."

How often do you find yourself behind locked doors, afraid of what is going to happen to you? Are you afraid that your sins are too great for God to ever forgive you? Peace to you. Are you afraid of not living up to other peoples' expectations of you? Peace to you. Are you afraid that you will never find a job or that your job is suddenly going to be taken away from you? Peace to you. Are you afraid that you won't have the things you need? Peace to you. Are you worried that you didn't do everything you could to arm your children against the world's deceptive pleasures and the temptation to forsake the Christian faith? Peace to you. Are you afraid that you're going to miss something really important if you skip a game or

practice so that you can be in the Lord's house listening at His feet and being fed the good food He has for you? Peace to you. Are you afraid that you'll be thought of as less of a man if you don't laugh at filthy jokes or like and share pictures of half-dressed girls? Peace to you. Are you afraid if you don't get with the 21st century and accept abortion, so-called alternative lifestyles, and the idea that everyone has their own truth you'll be labeled a hateful bigot and shunned by everyone around you? Peace to you. Are you afraid that if you or your kids aren't constantly busy and involved in some project or activity or club or sport you are wasting the time God has given you or you are being a bad parent? Peace to you.

St. Peter writes "Perfect love drives out fear." If we would only love God as He ought to and deserves to be loved there would be no cause for fear. We fear because we do not love God. We fear because we don't believe that He loves us. We fear because we listen to our guilty conscience and our self-righteous reason who tell us that God can only love the good and the strong. Our hearts often refuse the comfort of the good news that we hear proclaimed by God's own servants. We fully believe the judgment of the Law but the free forgiveness of the Gospel won and offered by the same God who gave the Law is a pill that our sinful flesh just cannot swallow. I have to play my part. I have to prove to God how sorry I am and how ready I am to change. We suffer under the dark agony of fear because we fail to believe as we ought that Jesus' is exactly who He says He is, that He has won the complete victory over our sin and death, and that the forgiveness He offers comes without a price. Fear is simply another word for unbelief and unbelief leads to condemnation. Do not be unbelieving, but be believing.

Jesus knows you're afraid. He knew the disciples were terrified out of their minds and confused. He knew that they had given up hope. That is exactly why Jesus came to them when and where and how He did. He didn't wait until they pulled themselves together. He didn't wait until they got over their fears and worries on their own. Jesus came to the disciples right in the middle of their fear. He came when the doors were locked. What a truly merciful and loving God we have. He comes to the weak, the broken, the faint of heart. He didn't berate them for their weakness, their doubt, and their unwillingness to believe the message of the women though He had every reason to. He comforted them. He reassured them. He comes to those wrestling with the guilt of their past or present. He comes to you when you have given up hope, when doubt and unbelief have set in because the world seems to be collapsing in on you. He comes to reassure you that He is the Lord who has sent sin and death running for the hills and who will make sure that not a day passes when you don't have exactly what you need. He comes and shows you where the nails and spear pierced Him. Peace to you.

You worry and fear because the glorious truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and everything that means for you seems too good to be true. The thought that there is truly NOTHING to worry about, that your Heavenly Father actually WILL give you every good and perfect gift, that you don't have to DO anything to make God happy with you seems like a dream, a nice story that would be great if it were true. Peace to you. The Body and Blood that you eat and drink are anything but stories. They are the very same Jesus who stood in that upper room that first Easter evening. Stop worrying. Just stop. Jesus died. You are forgiven. Jesus lives and God the Father loves you. Your victory has already been assured to you in Jesus Christ. Cling to Him. Let go of the world. Let go of your fears and your worries. You don't need them and they are completely unfounded. There is your Savior, right here with you. Alive from the dead He is here in your midst. Peace to you.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.