

The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord - Easter Day
12 April, Anno Domini 2020
St. Mark 16:1-8
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

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

Alleluia!! Alleluia!! Jesus is risen!!

I hope it felt as good for you to finally be able to say that as it did for me. I hope the fact that you are being forced to say it at home or in your car made you say it all the louder. I hope you shouted it in the devil's face to remind him that no matter how hard he tries, no matter what kind of affliction he lays out, he has lost the war. The Lord Jesus Christ, your Lord Jesus Christ, remains the champion and you the victor with Him.

If you didn't say it the first time because it seems weird, shout it this time so that all of heaven and earth hear you, join the angelic victory shout and leave hell shuddering and quaking in fear - Alleluia!! Alleluia!! Jesus is risen!! **He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!**

This has been a very long and difficult Lent. In a matter of only a few weeks we have gone from having to scoot closer together so that everyone could find a seat to having to push most of you out of the building so we can maintain safe distances because of a microscopic organism that is still wreaking havoc all over the world. This morning, there were no delicious breakfast casseroles spread out on the kitchen counters or the sizzle of bacon and eggs around which we all eagerly and hungrily gathered rejoicing in the glorious joy of Jesus' triumphant resurrection from the dead and in the fellowship we share as His children. There won't be an Easter-egg hunt after church with the little ones in their Easter best running around searching for hidden treasures.

But the fact remains, Jesus is still risen from the dead. His victory remains intact, even if our ability to celebrate it with all the people and pomp and gusto has been hampered for a time. In fact, that only a few people are allowed together today, that most of you are having to sit in your homes, should be an extremely stark reminder of exactly why Jesus' empty tomb is so important and filled with so much comfort. Perhaps one of the blessings of this time of sheltering at home is that we are forced to get back to the basics, back to the essentials. We are forced to ask the question - what really matters?

And that is the forgiveness that Jesus has won by His death. What matters is the eternal life and peace of conscience that Jesus bestows through His Word and the blessed Sacraments. What matters is that **your** sins, **your** guilt, **your** death all died with Jesus on Golgotha. What matters is the cleansing Blood that poured forth from the sacred veins of God's Son, Blood that washes in the font and feeds from the cup. What matters is the peace of the Lord which He gives you as His servants proclaim that in His precious Name and by His divine authority all **your** sins are forgiven. These alone aid us in the hour when Satan is assailing our conscience, trying to throw our sins in our face saying "Look what you have done. You haven't done anything to deserve eternal life and everything to deserve eternal death. What you have done is filled your heart and mind with all kinds of covetous and lustful and angry thoughts. What you have done is wasted the things God has given you. What you have done is sought your advantage at your neighbor's cost." Be gone, Satan! Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! What matters is bruised and battered and tired and frightened and overwhelmed sinners crying out for God's mercy and actually receiving it from the hand of their gracious Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father and still comes even this day to stand in our midst bringing the peace and life of His cross. In such times all the empty fluff that we thought was so important and that we just couldn't do without suddenly fall by the wayside because they are of no real help. God alone is our refuge and strength. And He is a very present help in every time of trouble.

We are surrounded by daily reminders of sin. We ourselves are beset by temptation and anxiousness on every side. Everywhere we turn things are broken. People are getting sick and dying. Jesus said that we need to be able to recognize the signs for what they are. I pray that this latest reminder of our weakness and our mortality and our need for God's mercy and deliverance are not lost on us. I pray that all people everywhere would see this reminder for exactly what it is and repent and flee to the Lord Jesus who has brought life and immortality to light on this day of all days, the eternal day of the resurrection.

Jesus is risen from the dead! That is and will always be the final word. Not death, but life, eternal life. Everything that lies at the heart of the pain and sadness and sickness and death of this world have met their end in the Son of God who bore in His sinless flesh the full fury of hell and God's righteous judgment against our sin.

Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia! The dreadful, painful bonds of death have been severed. The Good Shepherd has laid down His life for you. He has fought off the wolves who would devour you with fear and anxiousness. The Lord Jesus

Christ has cast Himself into the gaping jaws of death. And rather than being swallowed by death, Jesus destroyed death. He has swallowed death whole. Death had no rightful claim upon Him and therefore had no right to hold Him. He entered death as a substitute. He went on behalf of all sinners, to pay the debt that we owe. And that, beloved of God, is exactly what He did. It is finished - your redemption, your forgiveness, your restoration to the Father. As St. Paul says, in Christ, God was reconciling the world (including you) to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them..." (2 Corinthians 5:19) The Blood of God's Son was far more than enough to bear my guilt, your guilt, the guilt of the whole world.

That is why the women found an open tomb and an empty grave. "He is risen. He is not here." (Mark 16:6) Jesus was dead. Now He's not! He's alive! The sacrifice was sufficient. The Lamb that was slain has begun His reign over all things in heaven and earth! That is why throughout the world this day loud strains of alleluias still ascend to heaven. Easter never ended! Even though we can't all gather together, nonetheless, one mighty continuous shout of triumph will ceaselessly be raised as God's children continue to proclaim this Gospel to the four corners of the earth. This is most certainly good news that is for all people! Our Lord and King who once hung despised on the cross, has marched in triumphant procession through hell and left death and the devil and the grave behind Him. And He shares that glorious victory with any and all who believe that it was their sins that He bore, that it is alone by His Blood that they have been forgiven, redeemed, drawn up out of death into the very life of God. With every Baptism, death is robbed of one more as the Holy Spirit raises yet another sinner out of judgment, cleansing them of sin with the Blood of the victorious Christ, and making them sons of God robed in the righteousness of Jesus. Death now has no more rightful claim on you than it did on Jesus!

Christ has indeed made all things new. He has made you new. You don't see it, but Jesus has said it is so. As you have been Baptized into Him you have been crucified with Him and raised to new life with Him. You are a new lump. You are no longer a child of wrath and death but of light and life. You have been purged of the old and evil leaven of malice and anger and idolatry. Do not let such leaven back in and lead you away from Christ. Do not give room to the fear of earthly affliction which cannot harm you or steal from you the promises of Christ.

Alleluia!! Alleluia!! Jesus is risen!! **He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!** We live now in the eternal day of Easter because our Lord and Savior lives today and always, triumphant from the grave. Easter will never end. Every single day is a day to celebrate the victory of our Savior and the life that we have in Him. Christ intends

this joy and peace for you each and every day and especially in these days of great distress. “Then let us feast this Easter Day/ On Christ, the bread of heaven;/ The Word of grace has purged away/ The old and evil leaven./ Christ alone our souls will feed;/ He is our meat and drink indeed;/ Faith lives upon no other!/ Alleluia!! Our Lord has prepared this great feast of life and salvation for you to strengthen and comfort your wearied souls. Come for everything is now ready.

Alleluia!! Alleluia!! Jesus is risen!!

In the Name of +Jesus.