

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord

St. Mark 16:1-8

5 April, Anno Domini 2026

Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Beloved children of the resurrection who again this day sing the praises of the Lord Jesus Christ who by His dying destroyed death and by His rising again has brought life and immortality to light,

Grace, hope, joy, peace, and strength to you from God our Father and from our triumphant Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus said "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." That was the plan prepared by God from before the foundation of the world. And all had happened just as Jesus foretold - word for word. Only one thing remained. If what Jesus said was true, if He truly was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, if it really was finished, if salvation really was accomplished, then there was no need for the women to go to the tomb because it was the third day and Jesus had told them that on that day He would rise.

But their hearts had been clouded by sorrow. The horror of what had been done to Jesus, the totality of his destruction, the black darkness that had consumed the land for three hours - these spoke only of death. Those who hated Jesus were still out there and would be more than happy to bring down a similar judgment against any who had followed Jesus. That was simply too much. Mary, Mary, and Salome were utterly convinced by reason and experience that nothing had changed and that the body of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified was laying in the sealed tomb on the brink of decay.

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But Jesus meant what He said. It was the third day. Having rested from all His work that He had done in redeeming man, Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, still bearing the stripes of the scourges, the marks of the nails, and the opening in his side from the spear that drew forth water and Blood, marched unimpeded past the shattered gates of hell with the banners of His victory waving triumphantly overhead. Hell's prince and his horde and all who had rejected God's warnings and promise of salvation cried out in the agony of defeat as the God man proclaimed His victory.

Ironically, it was the devil who heard the first Easter sermon. But it bore no good news for him. It was torture. He was crushed. All of his accusations against us had been stripped from him. His only weapon, the guilt of our sin, was empty. All of its ammunition had been spent on Jesus. All of God's wrath against us had been poured out against His beloved Son bearing our sin. Justice had been meted out in full and the devil's kingdom was conquered.

The time had now come for our conquering King to leave death and the grave behind forever, the first fruits of them who have fallen asleep. It was indeed a strange a dreadful strife when life and death contended. He who is life humbled Himself to the point of death, allowing death to close its jaws around Him. But the victory remained with Life. The wages of sin were paid in full. God died. But with sin atoned for, the sting of death was removed. The giant stone that was sealed to keep Jesus in had no right to do so. It had to give way. The door to grave opened and out stepped Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

So why were the women going to the tomb? Why were they alarmed when they saw the angel, the messenger sent by God to proclaim Jesus' resurrection to them and to direct them back out of the tomb? They were slow to believe. They were giving too much place to their emotions. The weakness of their flesh clouded their hearts to twist Jesus' plain words "...on the third day he will rise" to mean something other than what he clearly said. "Maybe Jesus meant some kind of symbolic or metaphorical rising. Maybe he was talking about how He would rise in our hearts as we remembered how great He was and how much we miss Him. But OBVIOUSLY He didn't mean that He would literally rise from the dead and be alive again, walking around, speaking and eating with His disciples."

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But that is exactly what He meant. If He didn't, then His entire life and ministry, all that He suffered, and our faith are in vain. The very same body that grew in wisdom and in stature, the same Lord who healed diseases and fed thousands and raised Lazarus from the dead, that same man who was most definitely dead, was dead no longer. He was very much alive. He was not a ghost or phantom. He didn't rise spiritually or only as a disembodied soul. The Jesus that descended into hell and walked out of the tomb is the same Jesus, body and soul, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, hungered, wept, laughed, and slept.

And that changes everything for you and me! No longer can the Law stand against us to condemn us. No longer are we slaves to sin. No longer is death a terror for us. No longer must we live in fear of the mad ravings of the devil and this wicked world. No longer must we be consumed by the old leaven of malice and evil. We are God's new creation. The old was drowned and died in the waters of the font and God brought forth something new, something living, something conformed to the image and likeness of His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. We have been given new life, new hope, new powers, new desires.

So why do we continue to look for the living among the dead? Why do we still go looking for life and good and peace among the dead things of this world? Why do we bend and twist and equivocate to gain the world's approval? Why do we still tremble in the face of death and desperately fight and claw to cling to our life in this world among the dead? We are not going to find Jesus there. He is the Living One. He is Life.

Stop looking for answers among the dead, among the unbelievers, among the pleasures of this world. Your Lord is here, just as He told you. As He promised He is in the midst of those who gather in His Name to hear the apostolic witness to His resurrection, to call upon Him in every trouble, to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood as He bids us for the forgiveness of all our sins. If you want to find the Living One go where He has gathered His living ones. There you will see Him. Here you will see Him just as He told you. Here by His Word He puts your doubts to rest. Here He shows you His hands and His side. Here He breathes on you the life-giving words of the forgiveness of all your sins. You will not find any of that out there. Stop looking for the living

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among the dead. Stop looking for hope and joy and peace out among those who have no hope, whose only joys are fleeting, whose hearts are filled with anxiousness and foreboding because the world is descending into chaos and the only answer they have is to try to numb themselves with lies and pleasures.

Jesus has gone before us and prepared this table and the feast of His Body and Blood just as He promised. That is why He bids us gather here, because He is here with His gifts of life and forgiveness and joy. That is why it is good that we are here. Because He is here and here He gives you everything that He accomplished on Good Friday.

Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, is risen! Do not be alarmed. Do not be afraid. The devil is conquered. Sin is paid for. Death is disarmed. The world has been overcome. The enemies of God, your enemies, lie vanquished under Jesus' feet. Do not be afraid. Instead, share the good news. Shout it from the rooftops! Don't be afraid of coworkers or family or neighbors. Tell them. Tell them Jesus died for them and is risen! Nothing else matters. Don't seek their approval. Seek their salvation. If they don't believe it or like it or think it's stupid, even if they get angry with you, doesn't mean it isn't true. It just means they would prefer to remain among the dead now and for all eternity. That's all the more reason to tell them.

Don't be afraid. Don't seek Jesus among the dead. He isn't dead. He is the Living One. He will be found among the living ones, all those who believe in Him and who in Baptism have died with Him and been raised with Him to newness of life. Jesus will be found among His Church, wherever two or three of His children gather in His Name. He is here in His Word and in His Supper to forgive and feed and strengthen those whom He has made alive. He is here to make alive those who are yet dead in their sin and their trespasses. He is here to raise you up out of your sin and your sorrow so that you may be with Him where He is for all of eternity.

Do not be alarmed. Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified is not in the tomb. He is risen and He is here to give you life just as He told you.

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In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen triumphant from the grave be yours this day and keep you unto life everlasting.