

The Vigil of Easter  
20 April 2019  
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ Hallelujah! +

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!**

Beloved in the Lord, and especially you, Sandy and Bryan, whom we delight now to call sister and brother in God's own Son: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What stuff tonight! Creation. And then its corruption by sin. But a great redemption in the Seed of the Woman. A great flood. But then a greater rescue. A death sentence. Torturous. A burning, fiery furnace. But then a Divine Protector. A drowning leaving you as good as dead and buried. And then resuscitation. Death. And then resurrection.

Sadly, many around our country tonight—and indeed, around the world. And many around the world tomorrow will read all of that only as a cipher. A secret, narrative code. A myth. A myth about your struggles—whatever they are—and a myth about how somehow, some way, things will get better. Like a tragicomedy. Like a karmic formula for life. So...out of your cups! Be hopeful! Some will go so far as to say that your hope will make it better.

But both of you know—and do well to remember—that none of this—none of this corruption, flooding, sentencing to death, drowning, dying. None of this redeeming, rescuing, protecting, resuscitating, resurrecting—none of it is cipher, code, or myth, but history. And because history, truth.

Just so, this drowning and burial with Christ, this resuscitating and resurrection with Christ in Baptism—neither is that cipher, code, or myth. But for all of you—and now also you, Sandy and Bryan—for all of you that's now the reality you live. Christ's death, your death. Christ's resurrection, your resurrection. Christ's life, your life. Sacramentally. And therefore really.

For as surely as you will one day die, you must also know who you are: a sinner. A sinner under God's wrath and condemnation. You must surely know—and we've talked about this—that the Law of God pierces you deeper than you can even know yourself. And exposes not just your actions. Not just your words—even those said in secret. Not just your thoughts—of which you are conscious. No, it exposes a relentless, unbending, uncontrollable will tilted away from God. That's your sin. That's your sinfulness. It's real. And it requires a death. And eternal death. Your death and eternal death.

But now you have One who has stepped into your place: the Lord Jesus Christ. Expose His actions by God's Law—His words, His thoughts, His will—and what do you find? Nothing but divine perfection, righteousness, and holiness. Therefore the death He rendered He did not owe on His own behalf. Instead, He rendered it on your behalf. So that you can look at Passion and cross and say: My death.

And because you can say that you can also look at empty grave and say: My grave.

For just as the Lord Jesus burst the bonds of death, so can no grave hold Him. Or those who are in Him. And you are now in Him—through Baptism into His death and resurrection. And what He already has—

victory over death, grave, and hell—that you have, too. For death has been fatally interrupted. And as in Adam all men die, so in Christ shall all rise from their graves.

If there is anything better for you now—this is it. You will rise on the Last Day. If there is anything hopeful for you now—this is it. You are an heir of everlasting life. For if before all you had was your own sin, now you have died to sin. Its fatal power over you is broken. And if before all you had was your own death, now you have Christ. And He is risen. Never to die again.

May the Lord keep all of you—and especially tonight, you, Sandy and Bryan—in the faith of your Baptism. And may He who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Amen.

*pax dei, etc.*

jsb  
sdg