

Mark 16.1-8

*Dies festa resurrectionis domini nostri*

4 April 2021

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ Hallelujah! +

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!**

It was like a black hole, what happened that day. Forbidden fruit tasted, not just Eve and Adam fell, but all mankind. You. Your spiritual DNA has picked up a diseased code. And that diseased code can do nothing but lay you in a grave.

But, beloved in the Lord: today those whom Satan subjected to the long, sad, tragic drama of damnation—today the Lord has written a new script. For Christ is risen. Sin, death, and hell have been vanquished. The serpent's head crushed. The grave emptied.

And not Christ's alone. Yours, too. For He is the Firstfruits of the dead. The first harvest.

The first Adam laid you in your grave. You aren't there yet, but you will be.

If one Adam, one mortal Adam, can have such power over you, what can't the Second do, who is the God-Man, Jesus Christ? Just as the first laid you in your grave, more certainly has the Second emptied it. Though you aren't there yet, today is the down payment on *your* resurrection.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!**

We remain standing to sing the exordium hymn, hymn 488.

Beloved in the Lord: grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear again these words of the resurrection account: "[The angel] said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.' And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

*Oremus: haec, pater sancte, verba tua sunt, etc.*

When the Marys and Salome showed up that morning every one of their expectations was blasted to smithereines. They had, after all, spent the evening of the night before scurrying around to find spices. From one perfumer to the next in the marketplace. Looking for the right kind of deal. Looking to find enough for a burial.

And then, that morning, they had gotten up with the maids before the crack of dawn. And off they were. Spices in baskets. Hurrying through the dark streets of Jerusalem to the wall. And then out the gate. For that's where they had laid Jesus.

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It all seemed very pious, what they were doing. Merciful, maybe.

For their friend who had claimed an eternal kingdom, their teacher who had claimed to be a Savior—well, just days earlier His eternal kingdom had come crashing to the ground when His lifeless body crashed to the ground after the nails were pried out. When the one who claimed to be the Savior of others couldn't even save Himself. He was dead. Buried. Gone. Earth to earth. Dust to dust.

A pity, really, when you thought about it. He'd dreamt big and failed even bigger. Some people probably felt a little sorry for Him.

But the Marys and Salome—they knew Him well. And they were crushed with “sorry for Him.”

So this last little act of piety toward Him, this last care for Him. They knew He couldn't requite it. But that's how you treat the dead, right? That's the honorable thing to do. More honorable if your condescension to do it is obvious, at least to you. So you don't ask questions. You don't think of the reasons *not* to put on a funeral. You just do it. At least if you're a decent person.

And they were decent. Really. That's why they were there.

Decent ...

... and, for the moment, at least, entirely unbelieving.

For Jesus had given them His Word. He would rise from the dead. And here they were with the spices that were meant to mask the stench of His decaying body.

You know, come to think of it, it's hard to say what they must have thought He meant when He said He was going to rise. Maybe they thought it was just a metaphor. But who knows, maybe they thought He meant a real flesh-and-blood resurrection. As in “Your Holy One will not see corruption,” like the psalm says. Maybe ...

... Maybe they even believed it all.

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But after a Friday like the one they'd had. Well, it was tough to believe. I mean, like a whirlwind, in less than 24 hours, things went from just fine to worse than you can imagine in no time at all.

He was arrested.

Pilate pretty much proved publicly that He was no king at all, but a pretender to a pretend throne—and everyone seemed convinced.

After what happened on Friday afternoon there was no way He was going to save anyone at all. He couldn't even save Himself.

He stuck fast to His cross.

Suffered in a way that you never bounce back from.

Whatever He had said was going to happen ... well, it was impossible.

Because He actually died.

And still, even after all of that—the shame of it!—the Marys and Salome—they were decent people. That's what their piety to their dead friend said.

But Jesus didn't want the Marys' and Salome's piety. He wanted their faith. Jesus didn't want their decencies. He wanted their trust in His Word.

That's what He wants of you, too. Not piety, but faith. Not decencies, but trust in His Word.

You see, all the pieties of this day are nothing if there is not also faith. All the decencies observed, Hallelujahs sung are nothing without trust in His Word. Maybe you're here because it seems just like the only right thing to do. The decent thing. The pious thing.

But then you're to be pitied every bit as much as the Marys and Salome. For it was not the Lord Jesus who was to be pitied the first Easter morning. It was the Marys and Salome.

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So what's to be done about it?

Well, exactly what the young man did: he rebuked their unbelief and he directed them to Christ's word.

Because unbelief, fellow-redeemed, fails to see Jesus for who He really is. And because it fails to see Jesus for who He really is, it makes Jesus nothing but a common criminal and not a King, nothing but a failed experiment and not a Savior. It fails to see the connection between resurrection and crucifixion. Not the obvious one: that if you're to rise from the dead you must first die. But the theological one: that Easter morning happens only because death has already been defanged and destroyed. The crucifixion is not Christ as categorical failure, but Christ as quintessentially King and Savior. It is Wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and our redemption (1 Cor 1.30).

For, listen again to the angel's words: "You seek Jesus Christ, the Crucified One. It is He who has risen." Did you hear that? "Jesus Christ, the Crucified One."

Beloved in the Lord: there is no Jesus Christ, who is King.

There is no Jesus Christ, who is Savior.

There is no Jesus Christ, who is Redeemer.

There is no Jesus Christ, who is Mediator between men and God.

There is no Jesus Christ, who is Intercessor.

There is no Jesus Christ, who sits at the right of God in all power and glory.

There is no Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead

—there is no such Jesus Christ, if not also the Crucified One.

For Jesus doesn't pay for sin in His resurrection. He pays for it on His cross.

Jesus doesn't intercede for you at the Father's right hand because He has ascended to heaven. He ascended to heaven because cross and death are payment for the world's sins; His intercession before the Father is made by the wounds on His hands, His feet, His side.

Jesus isn't the name given above all names, at which every knee shall bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth just because ... it's given. But because Jesus Christ, though He was in form of God, humbled Himself to become obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 1.6-10).

Don't hear me wrong—it's not that His resurrection that we celebrate today is nothing. But mark the young man's words: "You seek Jesus Christ, the Crucified One."

Jesus' resurrection means this: that He is and forever shall remain the Crucified One.

It means: that to proclaim Jesus Christ as risen from the dead and the obvious, apparent, patent Victor over sin, death, and devil, is to proclaim that that victory was won not in His first resuscitative breath, but at His last breath on the Holy Cross.

His resurrection means this, that the first beginning of new life stirred in the grave is stirred in the power of His last word, "It is finished." Sin destroyed, and with it death.

It means this: that to depict and portray Jesus Christ accurately is to depict Him crucified (Gal 3.1).

It means this: that with the apostle Paul and all true pastors, we must be determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor 2.2).

And it means finally this: that the resurrection puts the crucifixion into effect.

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The resurrection puts the crucifixion into effect. And it does so because the resurrection puts the crucifixion into words. The young man doesn't tell the Marys and Salome, "I know you're looking for Jesus. Wait a sec while I go find Him." Instead, He directs them to Christ's Word: "Tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee ... *just as He told you.*"

And these words—they are the only antidote to unbelief. Even yours.

For these words, they forgive sins, just as the Crucified One told His disciples on the evening of His resurrection. Joined to water they work forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and give eternal life to all who believe them, just as the Crucified One told His disciples just before His ascension. And taken with bread and wine, the true Body and Blood of the Crucified One, they give life and salvation.

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*"Just as He told you."* Words.—not just for the sake of Salome and the Marys, but for your sake. Jesus doesn't want your decencies and your pieties. He wants your faith. Take Him at His Word. For the Crucified One is risen from the dead, just as He told you. And all your sins—even the sin of disguising unbelief as piety and decency—are forgiven for the sake of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

*pax domini, etc.*

jsb  
sdg