

Resurrection Sunday

P He is Risen!

C **He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Hymns: 16, 89, 105, 92, 292, 102.

Introit: Psalm 16

P Protect me, O God!

C **For I have taken refuge in You.**

P I have been saying to the LORD:

C **“You are my Lord. Without You I have nothing good.”**

P As for the holy people who are in the land,

C **they are the excellent people, and all my delight is in them.**

P Those who run after another god will have many sorrows.

C **I shall not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.**

P O LORD, You are my allotted portion and my cup.

C **You are firmly holding what has been allotted to me.**

P The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

C **Surely, I have a delightful inheritance.**

P I shall bless the LORD, who has given me advice.

C **Even during the nights my inmost parts teach me.**

P I have set the LORD before Me constantly.

C **Because He is at My right hand, I shall not stagger.**

P Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices.

C **My body also will dwell securely.**

P For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol,

C **or allow Your Faithful One to see decay.**

P You make known to Me the path of life.

All In Your presence there is fullness of joy. At Your right hand there are pleasures for ever.

Collect: Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

First Reading Acts 10:34-43

Epistle: Colossians 3: 1-4

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-10

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon this morning is written in the book of Matthew 28:1-10 which was our Gospel reading before.

1 After the Sabbath, as Sunday was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. **2** There was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, went to the tomb, rolled the stone back, and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. **4** The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. **5** The angel told the women, “Do not be afraid! For I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified. **6** He is not here. For He has risen, as He said. Come! See the place where He was lying! **7** Then go quickly, and tell His disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead. Indeed, He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see Him.’ Be sure! I have told you.”

8 The women hurried away from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. 9 Just then Jesus met them, and said, "Greetings!"

They went up to Him, took hold of His feet, and worshipped Him.

10 Then Jesus told them, "Stop being afraid! Go, and tell My brothers to go to Galilee! There they will see Me."

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Peace be with you.

When you think of something miraculous, it's probably safe to say that you think of something real and tangible; something you can physically behold. For those of you who don't know, we just spent the last six weeks meditating on this very thing as we examined the different miracles of Christ's Passion; real and tangible miracles like the Good Friday darkness or the earthquake or the temple curtain tearing or dead people rising to life and walking out of their tombs. Today we focus on a miracle too, although the miracle today is a bit different, depending on what way you look at it. You see, the miracle of the resurrection is different in that there is seemingly nothing to behold. But you see, that's the whole point. The tomb is empty!

Now, if you remember, this kind of breaks the rules for the definition of a miracle. A miracle, by definition, is something that God does to physically display His glory. Water turning into wine...miracle. Blind people seeing again...miracle. Dead people being resurrected...miracle. An empty tomb? That's a little different, isn't it? There's nothing there to physically behold...nothing except emptiness. There's nothing there to wrap our brains and our faith around. It's almost like giving a hug to no one. There's just nothing there to grab onto.

Maybe we're missing the point though when it comes to seeing the Easter miracle. Where exactly is the miracle found? Is the miracle of Easter the empty tomb itself? This may sound strange to our ears this morning, but the miracle of Easter is not grounded in the fact that the tomb is empty. Truth be told: That tomb could've been empty for any number of reasons. Perhaps someone stole Jesus' body. That's not all that miraculous, is it? Perhaps Jesus was nothing more than a great magician, highly skilled in showmanship, like a Houdini or something. Maybe this whole cross and grave thing was nothing more than an elaborate hoax, or magic act. Would it get people talking? Sure, but that wouldn't qualify as a miracle, would it? That wouldn't be God manifesting His glory. That would just be a charlatan entertaining people. So what is the miracle of Easter then?

The miracle of Easter is the fact that Christ Jesus lives - body and soul complete. That may sound like semantics to some of you, but there is a big difference between faith in an empty tomb and faith in a living, breathing Saviour. You see the difference all the time in the fruits that these different faiths bear. For many, sadly, their faith is every bit as hollow and empty as the empty tomb they cleave to. "God is with me when things are going well, but when things are bad, God has forsaken and abandoned me. Jesus loves me as long as I keep doing good and godly deeds, but if I sin it's up to me to do something really good, in order to get back into God's good graces." Even something as simple as regular church attendance confesses the truth of our faith louder and clearer than our lips can ever do. Things like: "I don't need to go to church every Sunday. So-and-so made me mad so I'm not going back. I can sleep in. I can stay away. I can do what I want to do. I can go to the footy or cricket if I want to. After all, I'm still a believer."

So what's that you believe in? Sinful attitudes like that betray a belief in an empty Jesus; a Jesus who's not really here. After all, I'd be willing to bet that if people truly believed that almighty Jesus Christ truly was here in His Word and His Sacrament, they would be here too! Every one of us would! These pews would be full every single Sunday! There would be no such thing as lapsed members or grudges or hard feelings or any of that sinful garbage. We wouldn't dare act like that in front of our Lord and Saviour; that

is, if we honestly believed that He really was here with us. But that's just it. Sometimes we do act like that. Sometimes we act like Jesus isn't really here and we're all just standing in an empty tomb of a room...each and every one of us.

Our words and our deeds betray us all the time. I'm sorry to break this news to some of you, but the church is made up of sinners. The church is made up of sinful people who have an imperfect faith that doesn't always trust in the Christological realities right before our very eyes.

That's the real miracle here! Our Lord still comes to us...in spite of us! He comes to this graveyard every single week, not to bring justly deserved fire and brimstone, but to bring to us His amazing free gifts of life, salvation, and forgiveness. He comes to us to literally breathe life into our rotten corpses of sin, breathing life into us by means of His life-giving Word and Sacraments. That's the miracle of Easter. It's not a miracle that happened almost two thousand years ago. It's a real and tangible Easter miracle that still happens today in our midst. Our living Lord and Saviour does come to us in the midst of our emptiness and deadly sinfulness, coming to us to mercifully bring us life. In that way, the definition of miracle certainly does fit. God is manifesting His glory, His love, and His mercy in His unassuming, yet almighty means of grace.

That's where the miracle of faith comes into play; the miracle of believing in what is not seen. If you look to the Gospel lesson, the women at the tomb expressed this sort of faith. To be sure, this sort of living, vibrant, saving faith followed in the wake of a hollow sort of faith that journeyed to that tomb Easter Sunday morning in search of a dead and decomposing Jesus. But that's just it. The right and real faith did come about. And how did it come about? "Remember His words to us," the angel instructed them. Notice: their new and living faith wasn't by their own reason and strength. Their faith wasn't in the angel. Their faith wasn't even in the empty tomb. If anything, the empty tomb alone, apart from the Word of God, would've brought nothing but more pain and despair. "Where is Jesus' body? Who has stolen His body?" No! Their vibrant and joyous faith was grounded in the Words of their Lord and Saviour. Through the miracle of faith, they were able to remember what Jesus said, and more importantly, believe it to be most certainly true. The tomb was empty, not because someone stole the body or anything like that. The tomb was empty because Christ Jesus was alive, just like He said He would be. They remembered. They believed. They rejoiced. They shared.

Friends: That's what the miracle of Easter is all about for us today. It's about sharing the Good News that our Redeemer does most certainly live and He's here in a very real and tangible way, bringing to us His gifts of life and forgiveness. Just as the ladies didn't stay in that tomb and rejoice in private, but instead went back and shared this Good News with others, so also are we to leave this place upon hearing and receiving the blessed gifts of our living Lord and Saviour and go out into the world, making the truth of Christ known, bringing others back with us.

Think about that for a moment. We are not bringing others back to an empty tomb! We're not bringing others back to a room in which Christ is absent. We're bringing others back to sit at the feet of Christ Himself as He feeds and nourishes them with His Word, His body, and His blood - His means of grace which means life for us. My friends: Today is the day we remember and rejoice in Jesus Christ's words, "**Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" We rejoice because these Words of Christ are absolutely real and true, and not just in a spiritualistic, sentimental kind of way, but in a miraculous, real, and tangible way. This very morning, our Lord and Saviour truly comes to us in His Word and Sacrament, bringing to us His victories of the cross and resurrection.

My fellow redeemed: Jesus Christ lives this very day, and He lives to give you eternal life and peace with our heavenly Father! May this miracle of true Gospel peace and life, which is found only in our crucified and risen Saviour, be in your minds, in your hearts, and on your lips, this day and every day.

HE IS RISEN....HE IS RISEN INDEED, HALLELUJAH! AMEN.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

3rd Hymn: 105,

Prayer of the Church Easter—The Resurrection of Our Lord

P Risen and eternal Lord, we come before Your Father this day rejoicing in Your resurrection and praying in confidence for His mercy upon us and all people as they have need.

Brief silence

P Blessed Lord, You raised up Jesus Christ from death to show forth the fulfillment of Your promise and to assure us that our sins are forgiven and eternal life has been prepared for us and all believers. Keep us in this holy joy, that in all the days of our trials and troubles we may remember His triumph and be comforted in all our needs. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have given to us hope and established us in the peace of Christ, our Saviour. Give also to Your Church the boldness to speak without fear the message of the cross and empty tomb. Raise up faithful pastors to serve us in Your name, and kindle within many a vocation to church work both here and throughout the world. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have established the nations and hold accountable all those who govern in every place. Bless those who lead us in this nation and all who make, administer and judge our laws. Give to the nation's leaders of integrity who will pursue the causes of peace, justice and freedom for all. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have brought the promise of freedom to all who live in captivity to sin and its death. Give to all prisoners and their families the comfort of Your presence, and bring all to repentance and faith. Bless those who serve on our behalf in the Armed Forces of our nation, and as police, prison guards, firefighters and emergency medical personnel. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You raised up Christ as Lord of life and of death. Deliver the sick from their illness, give relief to all who suffer, bestow comfort to the grieving and keep the dying in perfect peace [*especially* _____], - that wherever people cry to You they may know Your mercy and grace is sufficient for their every need. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You give to us this Holy Sacrament as the remembrance of our Lord in His suffering and the foretaste of His feast to come. Grant us faithfully to eat His body and to drink His blood, that we may receive from this Holy Communion every gift and blessing He imparts, especially our unity of faith and life as God's people in this place. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have bestowed upon us hope beyond imagination in the promise of our own joyful resurrection with Christ to everlasting life. Accept now our grateful song of praise, and help us by Your Holy Spirit to live worthy of the grace of life You have so richly bestowed on us here. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have brought us to this new day of hope and joy through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Hinder the work of all enemies of Your Gospel so that this Easter message may be proclaimed to all people in every place, and bring many to faith through the preaching of Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You bid us come to You with confidence that You will hear and answer the prayers of Your people who pray through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Grant to us all things needful and keep from us all things harmful to us and to our salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. -

Amen.

4th Hymn: 92,