

Pastor Kenneth Mars

Christ the King & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Cody & Powell, WY

The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord

March 31, 2024

Text: Mark 16:1–8; Job 19:23–27

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Through prophetic inspiration by the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah saw and described the crucified Savior some 700 years before Good Friday. Isaiah 53:4–5, “<sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.” The Lord Jesus Christ was that man. Stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God. It is the great mystery and wonder of the Christian religion that God’s eternal and beloved Son came to this earth according to our human nature for the high purpose of redeeming sinful man.

This is what separates Biblical Christianity from all other religions. God Himself provides the gift of salvation which fallen, sinful man could not secure for himself. God had to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Jesus of Nazareth, the beloved Son of the Father begotten from eternity and also the true Son of Mary, born in time, endured the pain and punishment that our sins and rebellion against God deserved. We Christians actually believe that through Jesus’ bitter sufferings and death, we receive the forgiveness of all our sins, salvation from wrath and condemnation, and eternal life. The stripes ripped across Jesus’ back on Good Friday give all Christian believers healing and restoration. The chastisement He felt through the nails, thorns, and spear gives Christians peace which the world cannot give, nor can it take away.

We Christians believe, as one of our highest articles of faith, that God the Father loves us, the sinners of this world, so much that He gave His beloved Son over unto death so that we mortals might be reconciled to God. The crucifixion of Jesus is truly the greatest display of divine, holy love. That's why we are always singing, talking, and praying about Jesus on the cross.

But the crucifixion is not the end of God's love. Three days after Jesus gave Himself as the sacrificial payment for man's sins, including our own, God be praised! – the most remarkable thing happened. That same Jesus, stricken, smitten, and afflicted by His Father for the sins of the world on the cross, was raised from the dead. We know from the New Testament Gospels that several women went to Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday morning in order to finish preparing Jesus' body for permanent burial. Mark 16:1, "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint (Jesus)." Jesus was hastily placed into the tomb, late Good Friday evening. It was the best Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea could do under the circumstances. But the tomb was empty when the women arrived. Or, almost empty.

What those women did find at the tomb was an angel, described in Mark 16:5, as "a young man ... dressed in a white robe." You can well imagine the fear those women must have felt. It's already unsettling to be looking for the dead in a tomb. And the condition Jesus' body was in when they took Him off the cross was horrific, to say the least.

What they found at the tomb changed everything; changed the world. The angel preached the Easter message, the same one you came to hear this morning, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here" (Mk. 16:6). The incarnate Son of God, stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God on Good Friday, is risen from the dead!! Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the world, is risen from the dead.

This is what makes Christianity different from all other world religions. For not only did God Himself bear our sins but He destroyed the power of death

and the grave on our behalf so that we Christians might know and experience for all eternity His resurrection life. The great prayer and hope of all Christians is to know Christ Jesus in the fullness of both His Good Friday death and Easter Sunday resurrection. This is why Christians cherish their baptism in God's name so highly and remember it by making the sign of the cross, with ornate baptismal certificates, and singing hymns exalting in the Biblical truth that baptism saves us. For every baptism plunges that person into Jesus' Good Friday death and Easter resurrection. Every baptized believer died with Christ and was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit in order to live forever under the love and care of our heavenly Father.

Good Friday and Easter aren't merely two days among the 365 of the year. For Christians, those days are every day. "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it" says Psalm 118:24. Everyday, every moment is Good Friday and Easter. For we live in Christ and He in us. There is never a time when the forgiveness of sins Jesus secured for us on the cross doesn't apply; through daily repentance and faith given to us by the Spirit, we hold tenaciously to those words of Jesus spoken on the cross. "It is finished." Our salvation, our redemption, our adoption as God's children, the forgiveness of all sins. Through His blood and sacrificial death, it's all finished and secure. God be praised.

By the same token, there is never a time the resurrection life of Jesus doesn't invigorate our body and soul. In this regard, we confess what Job said over 4,000 years ago!! Job 19:25–27, "<sup>25</sup>For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup>And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, <sup>27</sup>whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

Christians confess, sing, and pray, "I know that My redeemer lives." He lives and reigns to all eternity for me and His beloved Church. Even when my body dies to life in this world, my soul lives in Christ. Even though my body may decay in the ground, it will be resurrected from the dead in glorious

splendor on the Last Day. “In my flesh I shall see God!” With resurrected eyes that will never need glasses or corrective surgery, we will see Jesus.

Jesus is coming again. He will stand upon this earth. On that great and glorious day, the trumpet will sound. The Lord Jesus will raise all the dead. By His almighty power and authority demonstrated in His crucifixion and resurrection, He will forever vanquish sin and death, Satan and his angels. Those who rejected Christ’s love and redemption will share in the judgment of Satan. God grant us time, courage, and strength to share His Gospel with everyone we know so that they too may know Jesus in the power of His resurrection. Grant growth and increase to Your beloved Church!

For those who live and died confessing, Jesus is Lord, the majestic Christ Jesus will transform their lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. No longer shall we be subject to corruption, sin, misery, pain, or evil. Death is swallowed up in victory. “In my flesh I shall see God, my resurrected eyes shall behold Him.” This is why we are always singing, talking, and praying, about Christ rising from the dead.

This is our Christian confession. God Himself did everything needed for us and for our salvation – in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.