

Easter Morning (April 12, 2009) Mark 16:1-8 "He is risen!"

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning is from the Gospel lesson just read from Mark chapter 16. We focus on the words of the angels, **He is risen!**

The last and greatest enemy of mankind is death. As we gather here this morning to celebrate our Lord's resurrection from the dead, this message of the angels first of all reminds us of why Jesus had to die and rise again from the dead. From the time of Adam, death has been our lot as human beings. No amount of medical advances or health kicks or anything else under the sun will stave off grip of death upon humanity. There is no escape for any of us. Even the most innocent to our thinking have death as their inheritance.

But what's worse is that we know it is our own fault. We can't blame this death on someone else, not even on our parents. As we heard on Good Friday, it is your sin that put Jesus to death on the cross. And it is your sin that brings about your own death. As St. Paul rightly said The wages of sin is death. That's your payment for you sin. Left to your own devices, you will get what you deserve: death.

This is what the women are thinking about as they bring the spices and ointments to Jesus' tomb. Their Lord is dead, so they go to give Him a proper burial, hopeless as it may seem. They went, but in their grief they forgot about the stone at the entrance of the tomb. But behold! The stone was gone! An angel was at the entrance to the tomb, and told them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.

Their grief in the face of death is now joy in the face of indestructible life. Only God Himself could roll away the stone. Only Jesus could face even death itself for your salvation and come out victorious. The cost was great. He suffered death itself for you. He died the death of a common criminal. Everyone abandoned Him. God Himself abandoned Jesus on the cross. All of God's wrath for sin was taken out on our Lord at the cross. Paul rightly said that the wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is risen from the dead, and that changes everything. You no longer have to fret and worry over your sins. They went with Jesus to the cross and to the tomb. And that's where they shall stay forever.

God's gift to you is nothing less than eternity for this sake of His crucified and risen Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Saint Paul in our epistle lesson calls this a mystery. That is the same word for sacrament. It is a mystery that only God can unravel. We may not understand it all. We may not be able to piece it together or explain Jesus resurrection,

as we would like. But it doesn't matter. It is a mystery. But it is a mystery that we may rejoice in for all eternity.

This mystery, this sacrament of the resurrection came to little Thomas this morning in the waters of Holy Baptism. What a wonderful day for a baptism! God once again gives His Church the gift of eternal life poured out on the cross for Thomas. As Saint Paul said, Death is swallowed up in victory. This Easter is Thomas' entry into new life. Death no longer has dominion over him. Now He is in God's kingdom. Now He is God's adopted son and heir not to death, but to eternal life. As our Lord said, Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God. Our Lord has blessed Thomas with the gift of life, a real life in Him that will last forever.

What is true for Thomas is also true for you. God has set eternity in our hearts, as Solomon wrote many years ago. Our Lord has put eternity on you in the waters of Holy Baptism. Saint Paul said in Romans chapter six,

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:3-11)

When we celebrate Easter, we are not simply remembering an event that happened 2000 or so years ago. This isn't a history lesson, my friends. Every time you hear the Gospel, every time the waters of life are poured out on a new child of God, every time you hear His Word of absolution or eat His body and blood, every time God comes to you in these many ways, Jesus' resurrection from the dead becomes yours. It truly is a mystery. This is why we call every Sunday the Lord's Day. This is why every time we gather together in the divine service, all of God's work of salvation becomes yours once again.

Soon God will put eternity into your mouth in the mystery of the Lord's Supper. For there the power of Jesus' resurrection is yours like no other place. You are not a walking corpse, scrambling on this earth to make a buck and get by until you die. No! You are a living child of God. Eternal life is yours, now, today. This is the feast of victory. This is the life that will never end.

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.