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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

The Festival of the Resurrection

April 4, 2021

Text: Mark 16:1–8

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!

Just a week ago, Palm Sunday, I preached it was the beginning of the Church's week of weeks. Holy Week, the most important week in the liturgical life of the Church. And here we are, at the end of Holy Week. Finally, Easter has arrived. Our full celebration of Christ's atoning death on the cross and His glorious triumph over death and grave can now begin with full vigor. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and now lives and reigns for all eternity from the Father's right hand in majesty for the glorification of His beloved Church. All the liturgical elements have returned to our services. The Gloria in Excelsis, the song of the angels sung at Jesus' birth is back in its place. As are those joyous alleluias we haven't sung since before Ash Wednesday. Every doxological stanza can be sung in full strength.

Dear saints of God, we need hold nothing back. The Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Atonement for sin is made. Death lies under the resurrected feet of Jesus in abject dismay. Death was its own undoing. For it seized upon the Lord Jesus on the cross when He was weakest, most vulnerable. And death killed Jesus. All the witnesses of the time, both friend and foe, testified to that singular fact. Jesus died. And was buried in a borrowed tomb whose opening was covered with a large stone. Jewish authorities requested Pontius Pilate to seal the stone with a Roman imperial seal indicating anyone tampering with it was subject to the full wrath and fury of the Roman Empire. On top of all that, professional Roman guards were set on sentry duty to guard the entrance into the tomb. Every human precaution was taken to ensure that Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews was killed, buried, and sealed in a tomb until Judgment Day.

But then came Easter Sunday and the power of God broke through the puny schemes and petty might of man. Sometime before the break of day, early in the morning, an angel of God descended from heaven to roll back the stone from the tomb. The guards became like dead men; they fainted in fear because of the holy presence of God's

mighty angel. Certain women, followers of Jesus, went to the tomb carrying anointing spices. It was to be their last act of devotion to the one they believed was the Christ of God. But things had gone so wrong, they thought. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and preached love and forgiveness to all men, women, and children. No one ever preached and acted like Him. How could the week have started out, on Palm Sunday, with such joy and celebration only to end in such a catastrophe? Betrayal by Judas Iscariot, one of the Lord's 12 apostles, leading to scourging and death by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. How could things have gone so wrong? Not two weeks ago, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He told Martha that He is the "resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:24–26). He promised life to all believers. But now He's dead. What went wrong?

The beginning of this service gave answer to that bitter, honest question of what went wrong. "Beloved in the Lord, on this most holy morning our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life... This is the Passover of our Lord in which, by hearing His Word and eating His Supper, we share in His victory over death." Nothing went wrong in our Lord's death. Everything happened according to God's determined purposes in saving the world from its own demise and self-inflicted misery. The Lord Jesus passed over from death to life. He is resurrection and life. Because He willingly bore the sins of the world and gave Himself over unto the inferior power of death, whoever believes in Him will never taste the full bitterness of death. We share in Christ's victory over death. Even though we die physically, as Jesus did, yet shall we live. We shall never die because Christ Jesus is resurrection and life. By hearing and believing His Word and receiving His life through the sacraments of baptism, absolution, and Holy Supper, we participate in His resurrection life.

Today, we sing and rejoice and pray and love God and one another in the sure and certain hope that flows from Christ's victory over sin and death. Not merely sin, death, and evil in general. But the sins, evil, and death that come to each of you. Christ Jesus died for your sins. He washes them away with His precious blood. The evil that stalks us by day and night cannot overcome you. For the resurrected Christ sends His Spirit of holiness to live and reside in your heart and mind. The menacing specter of death. It will seek to rob you of life and joy. But Christ Jesus is resurrection and life. Whoever believes in Jesus, even though he dies, yet shall he live. Christ Jesus has transformed death so that it must serve His purposes in our lives. He is death's Lord and Master and must obey Christ's will and command knowing that in the end, on the Last Day, even Death itself shall be cast in the lake of burning fire.

This morning, we come to these worship services seeking to find Jesus as the women of Mark's gospel did so long ago. The difference is that they expected to find Jesus' lifeless body still in His tomb. Instead, they met the angel who proclaimed the first sermon of Easter, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. 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 (Mark 16:6–7). We come to find Jesus in the power of the Spirit by means of His blessed Word and Sacraments. The risen Jesus is here among us! He is the One who speaks on your behalf to His heavenly Father, interceding for you. These are my dear children Father, redeemed and reconciled back to you through My passion, death, and resurrection. They are now Your children, dear Father in heaven. I will keep them safely in my nail-scarred hands throughout their earthly journey until the resurrection of the just on the Last Day. We gather on this beautiful morning to find the resurrected Jesus. In His glorious presence, we fall before His feet and rejoice with joy unspeakable and filled with glory.

The Son of God became one of us, taking upon Himself our flesh and blood human nature. Died for our sins and evils, the ones we have committed, and the ones committed against us. He did not shrink away from us in our desperate need. Rather, taking on the form of a servant, He humbled Himself to the point of death upon a cross and died in our place. Oh, wondrous love. That our Lord and Master should become sin for us on the cross so that would could live in His divine life and participate in His divine nature (II Peter 1:4). On the life-giving cross was hung the salvation of the world. But Death could not hold Jesus. Our Lord passed over from death to life according to the work and power of His heavenly Father who raised Him from the dead by the Holy Spirit. And now He lives and reigns from the Father' right hand for the purpose of glorifying His beloved Church.

Dear saints of God, this is the glorious truth revealed on that first Easter morning when Christ destroyed him who has the power of death, the devil. Into this divine life you have been baptized. Christ Jesus gives His very body and blood under bread and wine in the Holy Supper in order to feed and nourish us week after week with His divine life. But Satan seeks to bring us back under the darkness of his lies. We must resist the devil and his deceits. But we can only do so through the grace and mercy of Jesus. For He is resurrection, life, and truth. The apostle Paul encouraged the Christians living in the very evil, wicked city of Corinth to live according to the truth. From today's epistle reading we heard Paul's admonition, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and

truth” (I Cor. 5:8). Evil and sin are compared to leaven, yeast which slowly permeates the entire dough. The devil would seek to bring us back into fear and bondage. His chief weapon is the lie. We must cast out those lies with the truth that is Jesus. In Christ Jesus, our Passover lamb, we live according to the truth. Evil is not fun or good or expedient or necessary. The truth, and living according to the truth, is where true joy and pleasure are found. People of God, renew your commitment to live according to the truth. Church and worship are primary. Along with loving your family and friends. Honesty in all of life. Love and forgiveness for friends and foes. The truth and love of Jesus are our foundations for life in this world and the world to come. This Easter and every Sunday, yea every day of our lives, we live in the joy that is found in the life, light, and truth of Christ Jesus.

Nothing went wrong after the first Palm Sunday. Our Lord and master, Jesus of Nazareth is our King and God, went willingly to Jerusalem and Golgotha’s cross in order to redeem us from sin, evil, sorrow, and misery. This is our day of days. Christ has passed over from death to life. We sing and confess like Job so many centuries ago, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

This is the Passover of our Lord in which we share in His victory over death.

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.