

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 191 (187) 192, 205, 203
Lessons: Psalm 20; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; John 20:1-10
Text: Matthew 28:1-10
Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ, the risen Savior,

The wonderful, glorious Easter Festival is a day of rejoicing for the Christian Church. We now no longer sing the mournful Passion hymns, but we join in singing the joyful Easter hymns. The sorrowful strains of *“O Darkest Woe, Ye Tears Forth Flow”* have died away, and we now have sung the exultant notes of *“Christ the Lord is risen today: Alleluia!”* Our whole attitude has changed, our hearts are joyful, and our lips sing songs of praise.

Our Savior is not dead and buried, but he has risen from the grave! So we can say to one another:
*“Christian, dry your flowing tears,
Chase your unbelieving fears;
Look on His deserted grave,
Doubt no more His power to save.”*

A part of our Easter joy is to hear

THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL AT THE TOMB OF JESUS:

- 1. He has risen.**
- 2. Come and see.**
- 3. Go and tell.**

“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.” There were more women than our text mentions. The Gospel of Luke tells us that there also was Salome and Joanna and other women with them. They had rested on the Sabbath and then prepared spices to anoint the body of the Savior. These women were anything but joyful as they made their way to the grave. They thought their Lord was dead and their hearts were heavy with grief. They also wondered who would roll away the big stone that had been put in front of the entrance to the tomb.

Something wonderful happened before these women reached the grave. *“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.”* The Bible tells about two angels at the tomb, but our text mentions only the one who spoke. The earthquake was God’s way of proclaiming that something wonderful was taking place, that Jesus had completed his work of redemption even as Jesus said on the cross, *“It is finished.”* John 19:30. The angels did not open the tomb to let Jesus out. He went through the walls of the tomb with his glorified body. The angel was a messenger from heaven to proclaim the good news to the women.

Seeing the holy angel, the women were very frightened. We are told, ***“His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.”*** The guards, placed at the tomb by the Roman Governor Pilate at the request of the chief priests and Pharisees, were likewise overcome with fright. ***“The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.”*** When the women came to the tomb expecting to see the body of Jesus, they were greeted by the voice of the angel. The angel knew the fear that was in the hearts of the women. He told them, ***“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.”*** The shepherds in the fields by Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth were likewise told by an angel, ***“Do not be afraid.”*** These words characterize all Gospel preaching. The message of the Gospel is one that must banish all terror of sin and death from the heart and fill it with holy joy in the Lord.

The angel told the women at the tomb, ***“I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.”*** We could say that the women should have known that Jesus would rise again, just as we also should know many things that are taught in the Bible. The women should have known Job’s words recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, ***“I know that my Redeemer lives,”*** Job 19:25. Furthermore, Jesus himself foretold his death and resurrection. It is most important for us now to know the glorious truth of Jesus’ resurrection. It proclaims that atonement has been made for the sins of all people. What good would it have been if Jesus died on the cross and remained dead and buried? Would we want to believe in a dead Savior? The evil angels in hell would still be laughing if Jesus had not risen from the dead. But the message of the Gospel resounds in our ears: ***“He has risen.”*** That is proof that our redemption is sure. It is with great joy that we can confess with Job, ***“I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”*** Job 19:25-26.

The second part of the angel’s message is summed up in three words, ***“Come and see.”***

2.

The angel said, ***“Come and see the place where he lay.”*** The women could hardly believe what they heard, but the angel was ready to show them the empty tomb. No, the disciples did not take Jesus’ body out of the tomb. They were so frightened that they went into hiding after Jesus’ death. Today also the doubters and unbelievers are invited, ***“Come and see.”*** Come to hear the Gospel message and by the Holy Spirit’s work in your hearts be convinced of the precious truth of God.

Because Jesus has risen from the grave, we believe that he is truly the Son of God, that all his teachings are true, and that we too will some day be raised from our grave. The unbelieving Jews, the heathen, the Agnostics, have always denied that Jesus is the Son of God, one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. They may try to explain away the clear teachings of Scripture, but they run up against the resurrection of Jesus as against a stone wall. Jesus’ resurrection furnishes a compelling reason for believing that he is the true Son of God. And the resurrection also furnishes a perfect reason for believing what the Bible teaches. Jesus said, ***“The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”*** Luke 9:22. And so it was. Scoffers may deny that Jesus suffered and died to atone for the sins of the entire world, but the resurrection of Jesus is proof that God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, and that, as Paul writes, ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Romans 4:25. Jesus’ resurrection is proof that we sinners now stand before God as holy and righteous in his sight because ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Finally, the resurrection of Christ assures us of our own resurrection on the Last Day. Jesus said, ***“Because I live, you also will live,”*** John 14:19. Remember what Jesus told Martha when her brother Lazarus died. ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”*** John 11:25-26. So, my friends, come and see! Come and see from the Gospel that Jesus is the living Savior and that we shall some day also rise from the grave to live eternally.

We have one more part of the angel's message to consider: ***"Go and tell."***

3.

The angel said to the women at the empty tomb, ***"Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him' Now I have told you."*** The disciples had to know the joyful news, and that news was also to be spread abroad in other places. The command of the angel was obeyed quickly. The women departed in haste; fear was in their hearts, but joy was upon their lips. They could hardly wait until they would see the disciples and tell them the good news. As they went to tell the good news, the command to go and tell was repeated, this time by Jesus himself. We are told, ***"Suddenly Jesus met them, 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, there they will see me.'"*** Now the women's Easter joy was complete. They saw Jesus himself. They were so happy that they fell down and worshiped him, embracing their risen Lord.

The command to go and tell given by the angel and repeated by Jesus himself is also important for us. We also should realize that we have something wonderful to tell other people. Many things that are trivial, worthless, and even harmful are being told, preached and broadcast throughout the land in every possible way. We think we live in an enlightened age, but the news we hear in radio and television newscasts is mostly bad and makes us sad. We as believers in Christ have news that is life-giving for human souls. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the glorious good news of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. There is nothing the people of the world need more than to hear this good news. The world is very sinful, lost in sin, bound for everlasting damnation in hell. People are helpless to save themselves. They may have the false idea that if they try their best to live a good life, they can earn eternal happiness in heaven. The Muslims are even taught that if they kill those who do not accept their religion of Islam, they will have happiness in heaven. But the truth is this: ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** Acts 4:12. That is the blessed name of Jesus our risen Savior.

When we hear the words of our text on this Easter Festival, we should think about personal mission work. The women went personally to the disciples to spread the good news. They did not push this work on someone else. They did it joyfully, not as though they were doing a trivial and unimportant task. So we also should consider personal mission work as our obligation. A great sin of our day is Christians remaining silent when they should be proclaiming the truth in Christ at every opportunity. We should eagerly confess Christ before others. Jesus has commanded his followers, ***"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation,"*** Mark 16:15. How can we stand back and show a lack of interest in doing mission work when our risen Lord says, ***"Go and tell."***

***"He who slumbered in the grave
Is exalted now to save;
Now through Christendom it rings
That the Lamb is King of kings. Hallelujah!"***

***Now He bids us tell abroad
How the lost may be restored,
How the penitent forgiven,
How we, too, may enter heaven. Hallelujah! Amen."***
(The Lutheran Hymnal, 190:5-6)

(Reprinted from Ministry By Mail for April 8, 2007)