

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Mark 16:1-8, Job 19:23-27

Alleluiah! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluiah!

Today we read the resurrection account provided by Saint Mark. It ends with this incredible statement: “[Mary, Mary, and Salome] fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were very afraid.” (v. 8) They fled because the tomb was empty! They saw a young man in the tomb and he told them incredible news! The crucified Lord Jesus is risen from the dead!

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The ending begs one question for the reader. What are you going to do with the empty tomb?

Empty tombs aren't the norm, are they? Sinners die. They're placed in a tomb. And the tombs remain full. There are many graveyards all around us that attest to this fact.

God's righteous judgment against sin is death. Since we're all sinners we must face this gruesome fact: we will die. If you haven't faced the fear of death personally, at some point you will come face to face with that fear. The devil and the world do their best to distract you from death. The world tries to deny death with all sorts of supplements and plastic surgery. The devil does his best to distract you with seemingly endless diversions!

Why does the devil try to distract us from death?

Let's think about bucket lists. They wax and wane in popularity. Sometimes they seem to be all the rage. Sometimes you don't see much about them in the media, but it seems you always hear about someone's bucket list. You may even

occasionally get asked, “What’s on your bucket list?” I personally hate this question, but think about something you’ve heard on someone’s bucket list.

Maybe it’s to ride in a gondola on the canals of Venice? Maybe it’s to walk upon the Great Wall of China? Maybe it’s to run a marathon? Maybe it’s to see your favorite band at the famous Red Rocks outdoor amphitheatre?

Whether you get to ride in a gondola or not, you will face death. Whether you walk on the Great Wall of China or not, you will face death. Whether you run a marathon or not, you will still face death. Whether you see your favorite band live or not, you will still face death.

We all must face death.

As Christians, we pray that God would teach us face our death:

“O Lord, make me know my end
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am!
Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.
Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! (Ps 39:4-5)

What happens when we face death?

We realize we aren’t as important as we thought we were! We realize that there are people we’ve neglected. We’ve realized we’ve wasted time, energy, and resources on selfish pursuits that don’t matter. We realize that experiences, possessions, and status don’t matter in the end.

In short, we realize that we are sinners.

And that is very good news!

Jesus has come for sinners! (Luke 5:31-32) He has come for you!

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Mark asks you an important question.

What if death is not the end?

What if there is more?

What if there is life after death?

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Christ came to put an end to death. Christ came to fulfill the Law.

As Paul says, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Cor 15:56)

What is the Law? It is the will of God for His creation. The whole law is outlined in the ten commandments. The rest of the law in Scripture is really an explanation and commentary on the ten commandments. You know the summary of the ten commandments, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. (Mt 22:37-40) You know the spirit of the law: “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.” (Mt 7:12)

Christ fulfilled the law perfectly. There wasn't a jot or tittle of the law that He didn't fulfill. He is the spotless lamb of God that was stung with death. And since the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, which Jesus kept perfectly, death has no hold on Jesus. Death is defeated!

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We can sing along with Paul:

Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?
(1 Cor 15:54b-55)

Christ has won the victory. Death is no more!

What must you do to share in Jesus' victory over death? What is required of you to win this eternal prize?

Absolutely nothing!

“For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:17)

Through Jesus Christ, life reigns. Dear Christian, death no longer has a claim on you. The empty tomb means that you have proof of life!

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What does this new life look like?

Can you do all things?

Can you defeat your Goliaths?

Will you have health, wealth, and prosperity?

These are a perversion of the Gospel. Christ does not promise that you can do all things. He promises that you can endure all things in Him. He does not promise

that you will defeat any obstacle in your path. He promises you that He has defeated your main obstacles: sin, death, and the devil. He does not promise any kind of material wealth or affluence. He promises you that when you are poor in spirit, you inherit the kingdom of God.

So what does your new life in Christ look like?

It is a baptismal life.

It is daily drowning of the old Adam through daily contrition and repentance so that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. (SC IV.

God knows that you are weak. God knows that you stumble and fall.

Baptism comes back to you time and again with the assurance of forgiveness. As Luther says, “Our baptism abides forever. Even though someone should fall from Baptism and sin, still we always have access to it. So we may subdue the old man again.” (LC IV.77)

The new life is also a cruciform, or cross-shaped, life.

The devil hates you, the world hates you, your old man hates you. This means you will have suffering.

The devil uses suffering to tempt you to disbelief but God uses suffering to test your belief.

Just as gold is refined through the furnace, you are refined through the crucible of suffering.

Paul reminds us that “we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we

rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5:2-5)

Your hope is not based on an emotion or an experience or an internal witness.

It is based on an empty tomb.

You confess with Job:

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.
My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27)

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In Jesus' name. Amen.