

Sermon – Mark 16:1-8 (Easter – 2024)

The blessed day has arrived dear believers! The day upon which all our hope of eternal life hinges. We held this hope of Christ's salvation throughout the Lenten season as we observed the time with repentant hearts. O what grace our Lord has toward us that He willingly goes to the cross for the world's salvation. There He dies, and now He is risen! Our Savior lives, and therefore eternal life is ours! Imagine the rejoicing of the angels in heaven! And He didn't even die and rise for them. He died and rose again for you! Rejoice, then, dear believers!

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, let us keep this feast in spirit and in truth. We praise our victorious King with our festival verse, hymn number 348. Please rise.

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

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

² Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

³ And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away-- for it was very large.

⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

⁶ But he said to 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.

⁷ "But go, tell His disciples-- and Peter-- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

⁸ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

The women went early to the tomb to finish embalming the body of Christ. They loved Jesus, but they like the disciples did not remember the words that Jesus had spoken that He would rise again. They had fully expected Him to be lying lifeless in the tomb, secured in

place by the large stone at the mouth of the tomb. They had no idea the wonderful news that they would receive that day!

News from an angel, no less. The glorious angel came with a message that was even more glorious, **“He is risen! He is not here!”**

Their beloved Jesus, their hope, their Lord, their friend, is risen from the dead! What tremendous news this was! But it was too wonderful to believe, too crazy to believe. The women left with belief contending with unbelief.

But there is so much more than the simple statement that Jesus is risen from the dead. It means so much, in fact, it changes everything, literally, for the whole world. Jesus’ resurrection means that His’ suffering and death has absolved the whole world of sin!

How so? Let’s examine further. Jesus came to be the world’s substitute. **“He who knew no sin became sin for us,”** as Paul says. Isaiah 53, which is prominent in our Good Friday worship, really emphasizes this truth. **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

The evil suffered by Jesus at the hands of evil men—the mockery, the beatings, the humiliation, the thorns, the crucifixion, and death—was in accordance to the Father’s will, and was the His punishment and just wrath lashed out on Jesus for the sins of the whole world. The sentence for sin required such devastating punishment. As one theologian put it, “Jesus was cast into the debtor’s prison for the millions [actually billions] of debtors for whom He had offered Himself as Surety and Substitute to God the Father.” (Walther)

So the Father is Judge. By His judgment, He condemned Jesus to death. The Father, again acting as Judge, raised Jesus from the dead!

Consider what it means when an earthly judge sentences a man to prison. He is guilty, and must pay the price for the crime. What does it mean when the judge let’s the man go free from prison? It means that the punishment is complete and the penalty has been paid. The man has atoned for His wrongs.

So now, what does it mean that the Father raises Jesus to life from the prison of death? It means that the punishment for sin is complete. The penalty has been paid. The wrongs for which Christ suffered has been atoned.

Therefore, by raising Jesus from the dead, the Father declares Jesus absolved! Since Christ suffered the punishment for the sins of the world, His absolution is also the world's absolution!

Everyone's sins have been atoned for. The whole world is absolved of their sins. Every person you drove past coming here today are absolved of their sins. Every person you work with, talk with, and that you see each day has their sins forgiven. All your loved ones has their sins forgiven. Yes, even your sins are forgiven. And we can be sure of this because Christ is risen!

Of course this doesn't mean that all people are saved and going to heaven. Just because a gift is won and offered doesn't mean that everyone receives it. Faith in Christ and His work of salvation is required to receive this absolution and to benefit from it.

But this truth of the world's absolution is the foundation for our faith, and it is the source of all our hope. It is the reason for reaching out to others with the wonderful news that their sins are forgiven, that they may believe it and be saved.

And so you sinners, you who shake your head at your failings. You know you have fallen short in your love for God. You see your sins as a spouse or parent. You are disturbed by how you have had a selfish or a resentful attitude. Behold, Christ died for the sins of the world and that includes all of yours. And He is risen! Those sins have been put away! You are at peace with God!

And you who struggle with doubt, wondering, "Am I a Christian? Am I saved? Does God love me?" Behold, Christ is risen! All the world's sins have been forgiven! Yours are not excluded. Therefore you are not out of reach of God's forgiveness or His love. Scriptures say, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Look around! You are part of the world. Because of Jesus, you are reconciled to the Father. There is nothing separating you from the Father, for Jesus your living Savior has atoned for your sins. He loves you.

And you who have fears, fears about your health, your relationships, your loved ones, your future. Again, behold, Christ is risen! God the Father who condemned His Son for you, also raised Him from the dead for you! He has absolved you. Believing in Him, you are His child

for Jesus' sake! Your Father is God Himself. Put those fears in His mighty and gracious hands, and rest in Him.

Christ is risen, therefore the world is absolved. And so we come to receive it here with believing hearts. Here in the word of absolution spoken to you, and in the very body and blood of our risen Lord Jesus, which was sacrificed for our absolution.

Christ is risen! Could there ever be more meaning and significance in so few words?! What wonderful news and greeting to share with one another! A greeting shared around the world by those who rejoice in the absolution that Christ's resurrection gives!

In the language that may have been spoken by the angel to the women visiting the tomb,
Aramaic: Mshiha Qam!

Greek (though they celebrate easter at a later date): Christos Anestei!

Latin: Christus surrexit!

Coptic: Pikhirstof aftonf!

German: Christus ist auferstanden!

Norwegian: Kristus er oppstanden!

Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado!

Chinese: ji-du yi-jing fu-huo-le!

And with joy we share this most wonderful greeting to one another in our own language.
Christ is risen! Congregation: He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.