

**HE HAS BEEN RAISED!**

Christ is Risen!

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Hear again the Word of God for this Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord:

*Then, going out they fled from the tomb, for they had trembling and bewilderment. And to no one nothing they said: for they feared!*<sup>1</sup>

That is the second time in this Feast Day of the Resurrection of our Lord that several of us have heard the final words of the shorter ending of the Gospel of Mark. The first time occurred last evening, after the sun had set, when God began His resurrection celebration among us. He led us into His Presence through the Word from the new fire kindled as we remembered that Jesus was ending His second Sabbath rest. (His first Sabbath rest came after six days of creating the Heavens and the Earth and all that was in them). With candles in our hands, we carried light, along with the news of the Light of Life, into this building once again. This Nave which was totally darkened as the last candle was snuffed out and the Altar Book was slammed shut as Good Friday ended, began shining with a new Light. The Paschal candle, whose light symbolizes the Presence of the resurrected Jesus, led us into His chosen place to deliver His Word to us. That Word, then, properly ended with the Good News proclaimed by St. Mark:

*Then, going out they fled from the tomb, for they had trembling and bewilderment. And to no one nothing they said: for they feared!*<sup>2</sup>

How is that Good News?

Well, it teaches that those first century hearers of the Word were just like us at times. That is, they heard of the Resurrection of our Lord – and they knew He had promised He would raise from the dead on the third day. Just so we hear of the Resurrection of our Lord and should know He has been raised from the dead. The first women at the tomb had heard reports that Jesus had applied to Himself the Old Covenant prophecies concerning the Suffering Messiah. Just do most of us of eyewitness

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 16:8.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16:8.

reports concerning prophecy being fulfilled in Jesus. And, those women initially took the Good News of Jesus having been raised from the dead and kept it to themselves. Unfortunately, so do we keep the Good News to ourselves at times.

The Gospel of St. Mark proclaims the reasons that those first honored with the proclamation, *He has been raised... to no one nothing they said*. We are told, *they feared*, and before that, *they had trembling and bewilderment*. Surely those are not the reactions one would expect from those who knew, either from the evidence of Jesus' power over death or from reports of such, that Jesus really did restore mortal life to those who physically had died.

Yet, like us, they had been surrounded with those who were critical of Jesus' Word and works. Why, these women who had been standing a distance away from Jesus as He fell asleep in our sins on the day we call Good Friday. Surely they had heard the crowds taunt Him with sayings such as this: *Others He saved, let Him save Himself!*<sup>3</sup> The women knew Jesus had power, they had surely heard of His promise to be raised from the dead. They might have heard from the men who had accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Olives on the day we call Maundy Thursday that He had told them: *But after I have been raised, I will go before you all into Galilee.*<sup>4</sup>

Like those women at the tomb, we have been exposed to those who ridicule Jesus and His Word. We are faced with a culture that is becoming more open in its hostility to those who follow Jesus' Word. We are tempted to hear voices that encourage an "evolution" of the Faith. Our ears are hammered by voices calling us to accept sin as not sin, to affirm those who unrepentantly continue to break God's Holy Commandments. We are exposed to "documentaries" that advocate that Jesus was mainly killed for political reasons. And the list goes on...

In any event, the women at the tomb knew what they were being called to do by the time they reacted to the Good News by fleeing. A brilliantly clad young man, a

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 23:35b.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 14:28.

messenger of God, had given them a special, one-time, calling. To women who had been chosen by God to be the first eyewitnesses of the empty tomb, to the first living humans to hear the resurrection chant, came a unique commission. The angel said to the three women:

*All of you go, all of you say to the disciples of Him, and to the Peter, "He goes before all of you into Galilee; there Him all of you will see, just as He said to all of you."*<sup>5</sup>

We have heard the record of their initial reaction to that special vocation to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' resurrection last night and at this service. In the Resurrection Dawn service, the early risers among us also heard the reaction of Peter and the other men when the women finally did do as they were commanded. This evening, in the last service of the Triduum which began on Maundy Thursday evening, we will also learn that the men's skepticism about the women's tale of the empty tomb remained.

(That disbelief seems to derive from the observation that, after Adam listened to Eve about the tastiness of the forbidden fruit, and fell into sin, men seem to have gotten some kind of in-born distrust of women's reports about God's Word. The lack of male belief in women's spiritual reports appears to be much more than "male-pattern selective hearing loss." Studies conducted a few years ago indicate that men who are not regular in Church attendance often believe Church is mainly for women and children. Is that any wonder when mainline churches portray an effeminate, doe-eyed, weepy Jesus who would never condemn anyone of sins as long as they "love each other?")

Thank God He has given us the Jesus of the Scripture to proclaim. He is the Head of the Angel Armies. He calls sinners to repentance and forgives sinners who are man enough to confess their sins and will to turn from them. He rules in power and majesty among us through His Word and Sacraments.

That being stated, the lack of initial reporting and the on-going disbelief of the male disciples are examples of how much we humans lost in Adam's fall into sin. That gives

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 16:7

us another reason to confess that Jesus had to die and to be resurrected. That brings us back to our text wherein the white-clad messenger, having beheld the women's alarm at finding the stone door of the Lord's tomb rolled away and no dead Guy in it:

*says to them, "All of you must not continue to be amazed. Jesus, Whom you seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified: He has been raised. He does not remain here. Behold the place where they laid Him."*<sup>6</sup>

Wonder and amazement were, according to St. Mark's usage, reactions experienced by people when they saw Jesus dealing with His death for sinners before He died.<sup>7</sup> So, it should come as no surprise to you that, after He conquered death, and had risen victorious over the grave, that the women should have a first reaction of stupefied amazement. After all, people in our era still act with amazement when they experience things that appear supernatural or otherworldly. (If you doubt that, check out the *History Channel's* programs on UFO's or "Ancient Aliens." History? Really)? Now that you are headed off on that tangent, I call you back to wonder at the message of the white-robed young man. He says to the women at the tomb and to you today:

*"All of you must not continue to be amazed. Jesus, Whom you seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified: He has been raised. He does not remain here. Behold the place where they laid Him."*<sup>8</sup>

In that passage, God has again given us reason to celebrate this Great High Feast of the New Covenant era. The angelic messenger declares the central event of the Gospel and its result. The Good News is that *Jesus...the Nazarene is the One having been crucified*. The outcome of that Gospel is: *He has been raised. He does not remain here*.

It is true Gospel, Good News for sinners, that Jesus has been crucified. In His death, He paid the eternal price demanded for your sins, my sins, the sins of the whole world. His blood covers over your sins, not to free you to sin, but to free you from sin.

Jesus' death means that your sins are forgiven. You are free to turn from them and receive His blood-bought forgiveness every day.

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<sup>6</sup> *Mark 16:6.*

<sup>7</sup> *cf. Mark 9:15 and context.*

<sup>8</sup> *Mark 16:6.*

In Jesus' burial, in the dust of the same earth from which He formed the first Man, sin was cast into the grave. (Ancient icons were written to display the old belief that Jesus was crucified unto death over the place where Father Adam's bones had been buried). Sin is gone from clinging to Jesus; as you remain in Him, it is gone from you.

From that true Good News comes forth the inevitability of Jesus' resurrection. Because Jesus was crucified unto death in your sins He would be raised from death having freed you from them. He is truly the first-born of the dead. He will never again die. Just so, you who remain in Him through His Word proclaimed and His Sacraments will to rise from death never to die again!

In His genuine resurrection from the dead, Jesus lives again. That is testified to by more than enough eyewitnesses to stand in any honest court of law. In fact, in the angel's resurrection pronouncement, there is another gem of great price for us who believe the eyewitness testimonies handed down without error over almost two millennia. That treasure is revealed in these words as you have heard them repeated:

*He does not remain here. Behold the place where they laid Him.*

That means that Jesus is not confined to one place in His bodily resurrection from the grave. He is not restrained in His body to the earth of His homeland, nor to the heavens beyond earth. The fact that the Church has not been certain, for many centuries, of the exact location of Jesus' grave helps bear that out. Two locations are offered to modern pilgrims' to Jerusalem – the Garden Tomb or Gordon's Tomb – as the place where Jesus entered second Sabbath rest. That is just fine, for Jesus did not remain in either of those graves. He did not mean for the faithful to have to make pilgrimages to visit Him there. That is shown in the instructions that the women were to report:

*He goes before all of you into Galilee; there Him all of you will see.*

In that message is the promise that Jesus will continue to be with His disciples after His resurrection from the dead. In His meeting them there we are to learn that He will

continue to fulfill His entire Word and all His promises. Our text leads us into the reality that is true even when His followers are slow to understand and believe.

That brings more Good News to us from this day's abruptly ending text. In reminding the men of Jesus' promises, when they finally had enough information to trust the women's report, God showed that His entire Word of promise will be completed. Later eyewitness testimony reveals that Jesus truly did go before the Eleven into Galilee. There they did see Him, raised from the dead, in His body.

Though you may not have thought of it at the time you responded to the words, "Christ is risen!" you are actually declaring that He is Present where He has promised to be. The words that accompanied the first proclamation of resurrection in the body meant that Jesus was free to be again with His followers. The historical and biblical facts that Jesus' Body is no longer in any tomb, that He was seen by so many eyewitnesses, means that you can be certain that He will be found among His people.

That means that He is here now. You may have full confidence in that truth. Jesus promised to never leave nor forsake His people, His Church. He said He would be where His people gather in His Word with His sent ones. That is more good news for us who will soon partake of Jesus' true Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins in the elements in which He promised to be on the night in which He was betrayed.

Since all of that is true, will this be your reaction today after you behold through His Means of Grace Jesus again raised from the dead and present among His people?

*Then, going out they fled from the tomb, for they had trembling and bewilderment. And to no one nothing they said: for they feared!<sup>9</sup>*

Or, will you do as the disciples did later, unto the end of their lives, and publicly confess Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of sin, and His resurrection that declares believers right with the Father?

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

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<sup>9</sup> Mark 16:8.

Resurrection Hauptgottesdienst (Historic One-year series)

Job 19:23-27; I Corinthians 5:6-8; Mark 16:1-8

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*Pastor Michael L. Merdhouse*

*Soli Deo Gloria*