



**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
AMEN!**

Christ is Risen.....He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Well, here I am in the sanctuary at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church and it is Easter Sunday. I long for Easter's past with the sweet sounds of "Jesus Christ is Risen Today". I can almost hear you humming that favorite song, as I stand here all alone. That folks is the bad news, that as a community of faith we cannot be together here this morning. The good news is that Christ is Risen! Yes, He is Risen Indeed!

Yes, we will miss the celebration of this the highest, most holy day in our faith, but that does not diminish its message or value. Christ was raised from the dead for our salvation. He is alive today for all the faithful followers. He leads us and guides us in our abundant lives and gives us His assurance of an eternal life to come. That folks is the good news.

I posted on my page a wonderful video from our Bishop where she spoke about how each Sunday is a mini celebration of Easter. How right she is. If you haven't listened to it please do, she did a great job of talking about this pandemic and how we cannot let it dampen our spirits for the Lord even though we are safer at home than gathered together. Yet, I know, like you, I can hardly wait until these days come to an end and we can all return to worship Our Lord and Savior together.

Jesus' body was wrapped for burial and placed in a tomb. A heavy stone was rolled in front of the tomb to seal his body inside. Soldiers stood guard. The story was over. Jesus' disciples were sure it was all finished. They were hiding behind locked doors afraid for their lives, discussing

what to do now that their Master was not the one to redeem Israel. It just should not have ended this way. Their hope was dashed. Loss and grief certainly must have been present in their feelings that “it was over”.

But we already know what the disciples were soon to learn. The story wasn't over. In fact, the story was just beginning. As our Gospel reading from Matthew tells us that everything changed that morning, that first Easter morning at the tomb of Jesus. First an earthquake to signal something special had happened and they should pay attention. An angel came and rolled back the tombstone. The guards fainted in fear, while the Mary's were told not to fear. They heard and saw that the tomb was empty, and that Jesus was raised from the dead. And the best news is that they would see Jesus again. Their instructions were to tell the disciples. And then to their amazement, Jesus greeted them in the flesh. They fell to His feet and they worshiped him. And again, they were told not to be afraid, but to go and tell the disciples what had happened and that they too would see Jesus again. This was good news, great news!

But in order to hear this good news, the Mary's and all of Jesus disciples needed to go through the worst day possible, Good Friday. An odd name for a day that our Lord was crucified, but without that day, there would be no resurrection. There would be no victory over death.

What I am saying is that in order to have the joy and hope of Easter, we seem to have to go through defeats, disappointments, despair, and discouragement, just as the disciples did on that Good Friday.

Some of you might be feeling that today, as we cannot gather together on this most holy day of Easter to worship our Lord together as his chosen children. In the past few weeks, I am sure that most of you have felt some despair and disappointments while dealing with this COVID-19 pandemic. Things just are not the same. They are not what we wanted or planned or have been accustomed too. No big family dinners to celebrate this Holy Day. No visiting our families so we could watch our grandkids look around the house to find the Easter baskets that the Easter bunny hid for them. No Easter egg hunts either. No visiting grandma or mom in the nursing

home to bring her an Easter Lilly. Times are different today for us, but if we check out Scripture, there are plenty of stories about hopeless situations. And most of them had happy endings.

For Abraham and Sarah, God's promise to have many children seemed to out of reach, to them at their advanced age, so much so that Sarah laughed at God. While this couple tried then to manipulate their situation, God had different plans to fulfill the promise and Isaac was born.

Moses, an exiled shepherd was called by God to lead the people out of slavery to the Promised Land.

After much success, with no good reason to live, Elijah heard God's still small voice that gave him a mission to go on.

Ezekiel saw a vision of the scattering of bones from a defeated army coming back to life.

David, the little shepherd boy, who slew a giant and was a most sinful man, repented to become "a man after God's own Heart."

Or how about the woman at the well, who was shunned by society that found new life in Jesus?

There are so many more stories in our Scriptures and in the lives of all the saints that have gone before us. We know not only from Scripture but also through experience that the road to Easter is not perfect and smooth. There are stones on the path. Some are small and some are large. Some are so big we feel we cannot lift them or kick them out of the way. Some we can walk around, and others need to be rolled away like Jesus' tombstone.

I do suppose that this current situation that we are facing in dealing with this virus, feels much like a large stone. We need help to roll it out of the way, wondering how or if it will ever be possible to have life without COVID-19 again. Some of the ads on TV these days talk about how we are all in this together and we need to do our part. Just as the story of Jesus was not over, neither is our story going to give in to a virus. There is good news this Easter morning, even during a pandemic.

God, knowing that we could not cover the debt of our sin, took on human flesh, became like us, experiencing all that we experience, but lived without sin. God came down in human flesh and became the sacrifice of atonement to pay our debt. God came down in human flesh and took

the punishment that was meant for us because God loved us so dearly. That folks is the greatest news of all.

Just remember that we could not have resurrection, Easter, without Good Friday happening first. We are justified by faith in the unselfish act that Jesus did on the cross, a horrible death followed by burial and resurrection on the third day. That is how we are made right with God.

And so today we celebrate that victory of Christ, over death. And like the women in our Gospel story, we should run to tell all that we meet what Christ has done for us. That command of the angel and the risen Lord; Do not be afraid, come see and go and tell should be our marching orders as well. We need to hit the ground running because we have news the world desperately needs to hear. Jesus is alive! And because he lives, we also will live. Death does not have the last word. The story does not end at the grave. Death has been swallowed up in victory!

We have news to share, good news. The news of forgiveness and eternal life can only be found by God's grace through faith in our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus. This good news gives us cause to witness to others about the love of God in Jesus, not just today on Easter Sunday but everyday.

So even though these days seem difficult, a bit scary and not right or normal, to you and to me we must remember the good news of the first Easter morning. It is the center of our faith. Christ has risen. He has risen indeed. So go and tell everyone you meet because the last command of Jesus to all his disciples was: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." AMEN and HAPPY EASTER!