



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!

As I was thinking about this message, something kept jumping out at me. It was the question the two men in dazzling clothes asked the women at the tomb. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" At first glance it seems like it is a gentle rebuke. The women should have known better than to look for Jesus in a cemetery. Earlier in Luke's Gospel Chapter 20 verse 38, while reiterating Moses' encounter with the burning bush, he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac: the God of Jacob. "Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." These women who followed Jesus for the past several years along with the

disciples, still did not understand all of Jesus' predictions about his death.

True, at the time, these women were terrified being in the presence of angels dressed in dazzling clothes. Fear is a common response to the divine presence. The next words from the two men were, "he isn't here, but is risen." God has raised His only Son from the grave. After all they were there to perform the task of anointing Jesus' body. They just did not understand that Jesus would be resurrected on the third day. WOW! Certainly, a lot for them to comprehend, and for us as well.

For years I have used the words, forgiveness, abundant and eternal life, when I have talked to you about the gracious gifts that are given to each of us by this act of Jesus' death and resurrection. But how often have we thought about what abundant life really means for us. These women at the tomb were seeking a corpse, not the living God. And I think that we tend to do the same today, seeking the living among the dead. That is what I would like to think about with you this morning.

Jesus is the Lord of life and our hope of life eternal.

John 14:6 says, Jesus said to her, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 11:25-26 says, "'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

John 10:10 says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

There is that word, abundantly. We should have life abundantly. With that being said not by me but in Scripture, how do we find that full and abundant life. I do think that we need to consciously seek such a life, but many times we look in all the wrong places.

One way we try to find a good life is through our entertainment. We go to the movies, sporting events, concerts, and we spend time on

Facebook and surfing the web. And possibly we spent too much time watching the old TV or as my mother called it, “the Boob Tube.” We love to be entertained. I sure was excited last week when my favorite entertainment started again when the Brewers heard the words, “Play Ball”. Don’t get me wrong, entertainment is great. It serves a purpose for us but at the end of the day entertainment is a temporary fix and surely is not the source of abundant life.

Another way we seek the living among the dead is recreation. Again, there is nothing wrong with our recreation activities. I know that many times in my life, my recreational activities changed from flute playing to taking piano lesson to painting china to container gardening. Nothing wrong with most activities that we re-create and renew and refresh through. The problem is that it too does not last.

I have never been one to like to travel. Maybe it is because when we come home from a wonderful vacation, there is always more work to catch up on and more stress related to it so that soon you need another vacation. No matter how much recreation you have it does not lead to a life full of joy and abundance.

Another place we look for a fulfilled life is in our families and friends. Certainly, they are precious gifts from God. However, no matter how wonderful your inner circle of family and friends is, they cannot give you everything you need. Even a fabulous marriage falls short in providing an abundant life. The Matthew text were Jesus taught his disciples, verse 37 chapter 10 says, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn’t worthy of me.” Jesus goes on to say that if we do not take up the cross and follow Him, we will not be worthy of Him. I’m sure you remember how this story ends, with

Jesus saying, "Those who find their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

The Scripture about loving God more than even our spouse does sound a bit harsh. Even after 40 years, I find it true that Rodney, sorry dear, cannot fulfill my longing for an abundant life. That would be an unreasonable expectation to place on anyone, even Rodney. And if we do that, that can lead to frustration, and disappointment and would be another way of seeking the living among the dead. And maybe a reason that divorce is so high in our world.

So, if we cannot count on entertainment, recreation or family and friends to give us abundant life, who can we look too? What are some of the right places where we might find the living, to find the risen Lord Jesus?

Scripture would be my first and best answer. I love the poem All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. I would suggest that all we need to know about abundant life, forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life we learn in Scripture. Martin Luther would say, Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone. Scripture informs us. This semester in confirmation class we are studying the Old Testament. I think the students find it often times boring to study all those weird old stories. What I keep reminding them of, is the fact that you cannot know where you are going if you don't know where you have been. The Old Testament informs us and gives us background. The Gospels tell of God's great love for us and all about Jesus. Then the letters of Paul to the various communities of faith and people explain what it all means. Put together it is a great source of our faith. Jesus came to earth to fulfill the covenant God made with His people and how they should live in His kingdom. Love and harmony are taught so that we might love God and our neighbor as ourselves. The good news is that God sent his only Son Jesus to die for us on that cross and rise again to give us forgiveness, abundant life, and the promise of eternal life. These truths are the meat and potatoes

of our faith that we can come to learn through the Holy Spirit. This advocate walks with us as we scour the pages of Scripture and He makes them come alive for us. If we listen to God's voice by letting the Spirit guide us, we will have the peace of God's presence, abundant life.

Another place we can look for the risen Lord is among his people. Matthew 18:20 is one of the well-used passages in Scripture and it says, "For when two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." This is not just happening on Sunday mornings. Stop on any Tuesday between 10 and 2 pm and visit with our women who are together making mission quilts. God is ever so present as they work in service to the Lord, while laughing and enjoying their life together in this ministry.

Service is only one way that we come together in the name of Jesus. We can also join a Bible study. Or how about a prayer group where we can experience God's power.

Another place where you can experience the living God is in nature. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard, "I don't need to come to church, I can just sit in my deer stand to feel close to God while enjoying God's creation." There is no doubt that the wonder of God's creation is a living, breathing witness to His majesty.

And lastly, I think that we can find the risen Lord anywhere and sometimes where you least expect Him. For Paul that was on the Road to Damascus as he was traveling to persecute Christians. But God had a different plan, a different mission for Paul. His encounter with the living Christ turned Paul around so much so, that he went on to be a witness to what God had done in his life. He preached the Gospel, the good news, feverously from town to town in his many travels.

You see there are many pathways to a full and abundant life. But only one will give you what you are seeking in your innermost being

and that is a close, personal relationship with the King of Kings, and Lord of Lord, Jesus Christ. And the Good News for us today is that God continues to invite us over and over again through the Scriptures, in the company of other Christians, in the beauty of nature, in service to others. We do not know how or when God will surprise us next. But we do know that His promise of abundant life is waiting for each one of us, if we look in the right places, if we seek Him. Jesus is alive. He rose from the grave all those years ago to give us a beautiful gift, free of charge; forgiveness and the promise of eternal life in heaven one day. But today, enjoy the abundant life He has given us right here, right now in God's Kingdom on earth.

Christ has risen. . . . He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia and AMEN. Happy Easter.