

St. Mark the Evangelist, we, the Church throughout the world remembers with praise, thanksgiving to God this day. By his hand, the Word of Christ has been recorded, published in all the world. This Word, written in the Holy Spirit, with mortal hands, on earthly parchment, he wrote, to resound in this place -for you to have these Words of life, of Your Lord.

The Lord is risen! This is a great day. Your resurrected Lord sends you out into the world with His Word. That's it. Just words against enemies that seem to have no limit of resources, weapons, bandwidth, media platforms, and tactics, nastiness and malice. But God choose you. Placed you here, placed you in people's lives; draws others into your life; to live with His promises.

It's not an easy life, there are worse lives, but no life as this -is so full. The Word of God continues to fill your heart with joy. Here, in this Church, on this side of glory, you are most blessed. This spoken Word -absolving, forgiving His precious children, bringing babies and adults to life at the font, to feed you starving sinners with His very body and blood.

Your life, your work has merit and meaning because of Him. And because of Him, His works credited to you, you, your life has immeasurable worth.

Do not underestimate the importance and necessity of His Word and the preaching of it -receive with your ears, ponder in your heart, believe it, live according to it. Word that heals you. Word that raises you from death to life. His Word saves you from every evil of body and soul, until He shall call you from this valley of shadow of death to Himself in heaven.

You live with a promise: The gates of Hell shall not prevail. The battle is already won. You will not be harmed. Do not allow the devil, the world, your sinful flesh to rob you of this life, His Word, His joy in you. What were those odd things Jesus mentions there in Mark: demons, tongues, handling snakes, poison, healing.

So do the preachers of Jesus, even now, speak with new tongues, languages, English that you may be healed of your sins, set free from your demons, satan and his minion serpents cannot have you; their deadly poison shall not hurt you -not as His Child, not while you are guarded kept by this preaching of Christ, His Gospel of forgiveness. Not because you never fall! but because He has risen from the dead, and makes you His dear possession, with His Word, a Baptism for you, a life-giving water, rich in grace, a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.

His Word sounds from heaven here in this place! through the mouth of His servant, and His holy arm stretches out to feed you from His own hand,

poured out as the Medicine of Life and Immortality, drink deep of His joy, His resurrected life in you.

**A great day.** A good life is good not because things are good but because God is good, sacrificed for you and is risen! Good times are not defined by the circumstances around you but the God who has addressed you with His greatest treasure -His only Son. You sometimes forget this. God is always good and you do not have to see it with our eyes or experience it in an easy and comfortable life to rejoice in the goodness of this life because we have a good God. His death and resurrection prove it. St. Mark, all the rest, along with prophets martyred, oh how God loved them.

It is not God's purpose to make us happy, yes that's scandal for the modern American Church. It isn't God's promise to make us happy; but He gives something far greater- promises, gives you joy. Joy always comes with longing for things to be right, joy with some sorrow; for your joy is not yet complete. That you long to be with Christ, joy to embrace loved ones again.

**The joy of the Lord is your strength.** I read that somewhere. It's not some meme. It's God's Word. **The joy of the Lord is your strength**, Ezra spoke that to the small remnant of God's people amidst the ruins of Jerusalem. Jesus is your joy, treasure. He is your strength.

Looking around at a world crumbling under the weight of its own unbelief, you Christians, even pastors too, can get frustrated, ready to despair. Sometimes we do. The rebuke to the disciples goes out for you and me. Lower your head in sorrow. Repent. Unbelief and hardness of heart as we take on life, deal with life, lose sight of what Jesus death and resurrection mean for your every step in life, neglect His precious Word; Then you keep your head up. What did Jesus say, this blessed proclaiming the Gospel, your forgiveness, your life is His and He speaks then of your baptism, healed, nothing to harm you, to people walking in the shadow of death.

All around us -the ruins of our culture, the tattered remains of hope, the shadow of death. A challenging world that tries our souls. Frustrating dilemmas we find ourselves in as parents and children, employers and employees, neighbors and friends. And your Lord places you, choose you, not others, but you -to bear His name in these trying times, to share with others who have no life, no hope -to have this. We cannot afford to forget that the cause of our joy lies not in how things are going but in God whose mercy has loved the unlovable; redeemed those unworthy of the cost of His redemption. Dead for you. Risen for you. Keep your head up, set your mind on things above. Live basking in His life, His Word, His joy. And you dwell in the House of the Lord forever.