

The angel said to the women, **do not be afraid. He is risen.** How would the women explain it? What did this mean for the future? Isn't that why we are here today? We don't know what to expect of life, of a future death cannot touch. He is risen! Trust in what our eyes cannot see, our hands cannot touch, our minds cannot fathom. We're as fearful as those women who came to that grave so long ago. Faced with an undeniable, historical fact, faced with life in a hostile world. What will we do? Where you're called upon to confess, take a stand, and suffer any consequences. **Do not be afraid.** Your Lord lives.

500 years ago this week, Martin Luther commemorates the sacred days of holy week in Worms Germany. In a few days he'll appear before the ruler of Europe, Charles V, and the pope's representatives. He's already been excommunicated, under penalty of death; he'd been given safe passage to this imperial meeting; but so were some before him like Jan Hus also given safe passage yet murdered. Under constant threat of death, when called to recant, Luther confesses our Lord's truth. **Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they've contradicted each other -my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything. Here I stand. God help me.** The room erupts with people on both sides. He leaves the room, says **I am finished.** He expects to die.

Emperor Charles V will passed the Edict of Worms, that banned Luther's writings, declared him a heretic, enemy of the state. Although the Edict mandated every Christian, every good citizen should dutifully capture Luther, turn him over to the emperor, it never happened. Nevertheless, it inhibited Luther's travels throughout his life and made him dependent on German princes for protection. Living with consequences of making a confession of faith.

Years later, plague reached Wittenberg. Luther wrote A Mighty Fortress hymn during that time; the government shut down the university and ordered healthy town people to leave. Luther stays, along with his pastor Johann Bugenhagen, they stay and add more services for the sick and the townspeople who stayed. They simply did their duty to bring God's Word and Sacrament to the people, in a hostile world, threats of death, with ravages of plague. Luther, only did what pastors had done before him, what still happens here. For Luther, for this church catholic, we will suffer all, even death rather than fall away from it. To not let anyone or anything take this blessed Easter Gospel, this blessed sacrament from us, as long as we have breathe.

Do not be afraid! By His wounds, death, you are healed. Christ lives for all; but this is only of greatest comfort for guilty sinners, shameful people with pasts and secrets, the wounded with no hope of healing; sorrowful people who long for consolation. You. Your sins. He is risen for people who carry in their bodies, disease and every illness and uncertain future.

Do not be afraid. The angel said. **He is risen.** That you live with joy. Joy yet we have a problem of disease, death. The virus still out there, variants to come, this last year thinking how deadly is it. What's the mortality rate, .05%, I don't know. Yet when we think of mortality rates, it somehow it seems to escape you, it should occur to you that mortality rate is 100%. It will happen to you. -If Jesus doesn't return first. And there is nothing you can do about it. Vaccines will not stop death. You cannot stop death. You would think we would be use to it. Which one of you do not face death everyday? You live then you die. The way of all humanity.

You hear that death is natural. But we know better. We were not created to ever die. **When death and life contended**, Luther's hymn we just sang. How can you ever think, or live in fear of death, fear of any disease or virus. **Do not be afraid.** Your Lord lives! So do you. Anything that can truly harm you is defeated! What can harm His own. Death cannot touch you, and if you truly believe what our Lord has done, what He has told you, what your resurrected Lord brings, then what do you have to fear? How should you then live? Do you not believe that He chose you before the foundation of the world? He loves you as much as any saint or martyr ever born. Do you not believe when He said you will never die? Do you not hold His words that, **whoever eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.**

We rejoice this day. A Risen Savior, that you are sustained in this live; carried through all the troubles of this life. Joy, yet not without sorrows, a longing through this veil of tears. **O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?** Jesus lives. So do you. Our loved ones who die in Christ are not lost; we will throw our arms around them again. You will feel the embrace your father, mother, grandmother and hear their voice. You will hold your child in paradise! It will happen for you; it is yours soon. Until then.

Here we stand. No matter what. Bask in the beautiful reality of this day. His glory, His life given you. **Do not be afraid.** Your Lord lives. Hold this. Live like it. Joy that nothing in this life can take away from you. Joy, not emotions, but your reality. You have nothing to fear. Der Herr ist auferstanden. The Lord is risen!