

Sermon Easter Sunday 2019

April 21, 2019

Luke 24:1-12

Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the resurrection of Jesus, on those words from the Holy Gospel, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

As Christians, my hope is that you would think theologically. Many people hear that and think that they aren't theologians, and that's not true. Everyone is called to study God; after all that's what the word theology means, it's the study of God. Everyone is to seek God in His word and understand Him in that Word. So, it's a false humility that would seek not to do this. That doesn't mean everyone here needs to know the proper understanding of the implications of the hypostatic union between Christ's human and divine nature, or that you must be able to properly articulate why there is not reciprocity between those two natures with regard to what we as Lutherans call the Genus Maiestaticum. But you should seek to study and know about God. And as our Lord Jesus has risen from the dead, O Christians, what a marvel we have to study.

You see the resurrection of the body of Jesus says something about God. It says a lot about God, in fact. But today we'll be considering what this says about God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and His care for creation.

What's that supposed to mean? Well, to start, God has always cared for creation. You can see that in the way He viewed it at the beginning. He looked upon it and saw that it was good. He loved it. He couldn't help but look upon it, and so it has been inseparable from it. I don't mean that substantially. That is, it's not as though God couldn't exist without the creation. But as God is to be understood, He is at His essence a creator, right? He is the God who creates. In the same way, He relates to the creation as Creator and the creation relates to Him as created. We can't separate the two. And God wants it that way.

Think about how we see this. We can see it in how God uses this creation right off the bat. Have you ever thought about that? Think about God using creation. We see the trees and the fruit in the Garden. And we see Adam and Eve eating of those trees, encouraged to eat of those trees except one: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And there's always that question of why? What was that tree doing there? You know on the one hand people want to know why God would even give opportunity for rebellion—to which we say that God creates in His love and doesn't require us to be

puppets and He a puppet master. But, on the other hand Luther gives an easy explanation in that this is a litmus test. A test to see when man is not trusting Him and loving Him above all things. But why did He do this through the tree? And we can ask the same question of the Tree of Life. Did you ever notice that Adam and Eve weren't merely kicked out of the garden, they were cut off from the Tree of Life? Why the tree? Because God is the God who creates and He uses that creation in His supernatural and Spiritual purposes.

We see this in those trees. We see this now as well. We see it in the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of Jesus. We see this in baptism, in the Lord's Supper as well. We'll talk more about these two in a second, but as a thought, to see if you understand God as this God who works through His creation because of His love for it, ask yourself how you view Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Do I view these things as aids to my faith? Do I see them as a place where this risen Jesus promises to be and strengthen my faith in Him? Or are they at best neutral things I can take or leave, or even at worst things that could put me in a harmful position with regard to real spirituality? And I say that because we see so much emphasis away from these things in our day. You hear a lot about how you shouldn't seek Jesus in organized religion, how you shouldn't seek in Him the Church that has hurt so many, but in your heart, in the softly spoken whisper you hear in the silence. Now to be sure there have been innumerable evils committed in Jesus' Name, in God's name, sadly, but that doesn't mean that we should seek Jesus apart from these visible promises.

You see in this resurrection of Jesus we see God's use of created things. We see God's care, we see Jesus who had taken on flesh. We see Him redeeming flesh, making it whole, making creation whole. Creation has been ruined by the fall into sin. You feel it. You experience it. You KNOW it like it was promised that Adam and Eve would know good and evil. You know that, and that's just what Jesus took on Himself on the cross, and just what is shown to be redeemed in the resurrection we're celebrating today.

But at the beginning, I said this was theological. So as we study God in the midst of this, what does it say about Him? In other words, we come again to the Lutheran Question, "Was ist das? What does this mean?" Well you see, this tells us about who God is. It tells us about life in this creation. Yes, as Christians, we experience the death and the condemnation of sin in this life, and so are always yearning for creation to come; the creation Isaiah talks about: But listen even about that: **“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.... The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy**

mountain,' says the Lord." Do you hear it in there? The New Heavens and the New Earth, the new creation will be just that a creation. A physical existence begun in the real physical resurrection of Jesus. And what does that tell us?

Physical life matters. Physical life even now still matters. Physical life still matters spiritually. To make this concrete, we see this in that what we do in this life matters. We can't go around as drunkards living in a constant state of fornication and think that has no bearing on our soul. Or in what often is perceived as a lesser degree of sin, we can't despise authorities or hold grudges against our neighbors and think this has no bearing on our conscience before God. These things play themselves out. God has written the Law upon our hearts and we are pricked when we break it. And when we are pricked, we feel unclean, unable to stand before our Father in Heaven with that good conscience required. The goings on in this physical world have spiritual bearing on us.

In the same way we can't experience the fallen-ness of this world without expecting that to affect us either. We can't be sinned against, we can't experience loss, we can't suffer pain and the ever incremental approach of death and not have that weigh on us. It all does. It all matters.

And this is part of the reason why I'm always saying we should be in church week in and week out. These things taint us. They affect us, and when we come here we hear of this Jesus. This Jesus crucified on Good Friday and raised on the First Easter. The very thing we celebrate today. We come here and we hear that, and that created, physical blood covers the pang of our conscience.

In the same way, you came to the waters of baptism and through that water—not that the water has any power in itself, but the word attached to that water, that Word of God that does its doing, that Word did something to you through that water. Not only does the water do something. Not only does God use His creation to work something there, but think about how He affirms that creation by what He chooses to use. In other words, think about how water makes sense there. What does water do? It washes, it cleanses. The Spirit hovering over the water at creation: it creates. In that water God cleansed you, as Peter calls it the appeal to God for a good conscience. There you were cleansed. There you were purified. There you were created anew, born again.

And as that baptism only needed happen once, you come now to the rail. And what there? The bread, the toil spoken of to Adam at the Fall, "by the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread." But here at the rail, not just any bread, but again with the Word a bread that gives more than that. God affirms what bread does, but then does something through it that's greater. That bread gives the very body of the One who toiled in your

place, and who was raised again for your forgiveness. That One here. Sustaining you. And giving you His blood to drink. We talked Thursday about the covenant. This blood covers you with the fruit of that Covenant. It covers you and gives you life. And again, thinking of the element, what does the wine do—not juice! There was no juice in Jesus day, the wine!—what does the wine do? As the Psalm says, God gives “wine to gladden the heart of man.” There’s that gladness in wine which He attaches to the supper, affirming the wine, but showing us the promise of the day when we’ll experience the joy and euphoria of His Kingdom.

And as we receive through these means from our Lord, we see this resurrection that we are celebrating today means something. It means that declaration of forgiveness. It means that God really has cleansed us of our sin. It means that we go away from here, cleansed in that, to live in the midst of this world that will taint us again. And as we do, we see that this God still cares for us still loves us. In fact we even see that this God is so good that when we go out in this world, this world that He created that He loves so much He redeemed it, we see that when we go out into this world we go out in the life of Christ to serve. Sometimes that service looks grandiose like serving the homeless, or giving up a strictly money-making career for something more servant oriented. But often it looks lowly, like picking up trash or changing a baby’s diaper. But this is the service in which we are blessed in this resurrection of Jesus.

In fact, as we look at God’s care for creation, His redemption of that creation, His creation as His work in and of itself, we see that we can even appreciate and enjoy it. Now don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying that going out and camping on the weekend is just as good as hearing the word. It’s not. But that doesn’t mean it’s not a good thing to go enjoy camping. Or it doesn’t mean it’s not a good thing for us to go enjoy our meals this afternoon, perhaps even with a nice glass of wine. As Jesus has been raised we see that we are allowed an insight into the creation of God that we cannot have without it. An insight into His love for creation, His care for it, and His care of us by it. Yes it seems so unspiritual, but the reality is that it is spiritual. Not in the sense that we can connect with God through it without His Word, but in the sense that He has made, has redeemed, has cared for it and it is His. This is what He showed in the resurrection of Jesus. And this is what this resurrection tells us today: the care of God in the created body of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, for new life, and for you, redemption in Him, baptized, fed, and forgiven. And it even tells you that you can learn theology. Amen. Alleluia, Christ is Risen!