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The Resurrection of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Death Is Dead!”

Text: Mark 16:1-8; Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **[He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]** Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The women went to the tomb. They expected death. Of course they did. Death is what they saw. Death is what we know. Death surrounds us. *Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands* (LSB #458). And behind the tomb's large stone. Dead doesn't go away. You don't recover from dead like you do from the flu. Dead is dead. And so is hope.

So when they get to the tomb and the stone is rolled away and dead is not there, they are confused, they are alarmed, they are scared. They are seized with trembling and astonishment. *What happened to death?* They hope, they want to hope, that the message of the angel might be true. That there might be life . . .

At first, they said nothing. They had nothing to say. You know how it is. When you go to a funeral, what do you say? The words don't come. Or if they do, they're clumsy and awkward. We might even flee, like the women did. Get out of there fast. It's safer. Don't stay too long. What's the use?

They took spices. We send flowers. Anything to cover up the aroma of death. Death stinks. And not just literally. God knew it. That's why He told Adam and Eve not to eat from that tree that would bring death. But they had to find out for themselves. They ate, and tasted death. They ate, but they were the ones who got swallowed up. And now there would be tombs and sadness and separation.

And so it is today. In the news just this past week . . .

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza rage on. They're not the first and they're not the last, just the latest. Thousands dead.

Armed men shoot up a theatre. It's not the first time and it's surely not the last time, just the latest time. Hundreds dead.

A bridge collapses. It's not the first time and it won't be the last time, just the latest time.

And men who went to work that night to support their families would not come home.

A police officer is murdered, shot and killed in cold blood. And a wife and small child are left behind. And surely it will happen again.

This is our reality. We're stunned, but for how long? How long until we just move on. Death is just a part of life. Ever hear that? It's dead wrong! But how some people move on. Who's to blame? There must be someone to blame! That's how some cope. But that's little comfort. Because death keeps coming, keeps happening, to young and old, men and women, expected and unexpected . . .

Death is what we see. Death is what we know. Death surrounds us.

Until today!

Because today, suddenly, death was not the one who did the swallowing. As the prophet Isaiah said, death got swallowed up! Forever. And there's only one big enough, strong enough, and now alive enough, to do that. The Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, He was crucified. Yes, He was dead. Yes, He was buried. But for this. To do this. To rise from death. And in rising from death, to swallow the swallower. To slay the slayer. To deal death a mortal blow. To break the seal of the tomb - and not just His own. Ours too. That though we, too, will die, yet shall we live (John 11:25).

That in this world there we are surrounded by death, here, here we be surrounded by life. That in this world where death keeps coming, keeps happening, here life keeps coming, keeps happening. Life given in the waters of Holy Baptism. Life given in the forgiveness of our sins. Life given in the proclamation of the Gospel. Life given in the once-crucified but now risen Body and Blood of Jesus. Here dead *does* go away. Here we *are* raised from death. Here death *is* dead. In Jesus.

In Jesus, who is *the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25).

In Jesus, who raised the daughter of a centurion from death to life (Mark 5:35-43).

In Jesus, who raised the only son of the widow of Nain from death to life (Luke 7:11-17).

In Jesus, who called His four-day-dead friend Lazarus from the tomb, alive (John 11:38-44).

And in Jesus, who will call you out of your tomb on the Last Day to life (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

So we have hope. Of life. And not just a little life for a short time. But a full and abundant life. An eternal life. With no more war, no more mass shootings, no more bridge collapses, no more murder, no more sorrow. ***The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces*** - from your face. That tears no more stain the face of you who are in Christ Jesus.

That is the day we are waiting for. The women had to wait until the third day; how long will our wait be? I do not know. Our Father knows, and that is enough. That day will come when He has determined. And just as with Jesus, it will be at just the right time.

Until that day, we come to the feast our Lord has prepared for us on Mount Calvary, the feast of feasts. The feast we swallow that swallows death. The feast that gives us joy and salvation. The feast not just of rich food and well-aged wine, but the very Body and Blood of Jesus, the feast of life.

Until that day, because of Jesus' resurrection, even though we live surrounded by death, we do not live without hope. And with hope, not a wishful hope, but the *sure and certain hope* of Jesus' resurrection, we do have something to say when faced with death - the message of the angel: that

Christ is risen! And death is annihilated.

Christ is risen! And the evil ones are cast down.

Christ is risen! And life is liberated.

Christ is risen! And the tomb is broken.

Christ is risen! And we have hope.

Christ is risen! And there is for us a glorious future.

For what happened to death?

Jesus happened!

And He is alive forevermore.

Yes! For Christ is risen! [**He is indeed! Alleluia!**] Alleluia!

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.