

20 April 2025  
The Resurrection of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Proclaiming the Good News”

Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Isaiah 65:17-25

*(Note: Our Lenten midweek meditations this year have been hearing the story of Jesus' Passion and all that happened from the perspective of an angel. Tonight's meditation is the last installment of that series. So, listen once more to the angel describe what happened that Sunday morning . . .)*

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.

I wish you humans could see as we angels see. I daresay you wouldn't panic and worry and fear as much as you usually do. Oh, not that the sin and evil and trouble in the world doesn't hurt - it does. And not that the traitor, my evil *former* brother, the devil, isn't dangerous - he most certainly is. But our Father is greater than all that! And He is working all things for your good! Even if you can't see it. We can. And what happened these three days proves it. For if our Father can bring good even from the cross and the death of His Son, then there's nothing He can't bring good from!

What in your life is worse than that? Than the cross? If you think there is, that's a pretty audacious claim! Someone sinned against you, hurt you? Well, Jesus took *all* those sin upon Himself - so that's like *infinity* on Jesus and one, or a few, on you. Now, I'm not belittling sin or the hurt it's causing you, or even death and the fear it's causing you - not at all! Watching you go through it hurts our Father as well. This is not what He wants for you! You parents know that. When your child is hurting or scared, you want to help them. How much more your perfect heavenly Father! No, I mean only to direct your eyes off of yourself and what's happening to you, so that you plant them firmly on Jesus. For when you look at yourself and the sin and hurt and pain, you magnify it. And when you look at Jesus and His forgiveness and healing and joy, you magnify those. And that's better.

And that's what happened that Sunday morning. The women - bless their hearts! - went to the tomb looking for death. And since that's what they were looking at, that's what filled their minds - the horrible images of blood and death - they were filled with sadness and dread. So as they approached the tomb - and I saw them! I

was there! I was one of the angels who came down and rolled the stone away from the tomb so they could see it was empty. You know, we didn't do that to let Jesus out! Oh, how I laugh when I hear some people say that! Like Jesus needed us to help Him rise from the dead! No, He was risen already when we rolled the stone away and waited for the women.

But we didn't let them see us at first. That's what our Father told us to do - and we always do exactly what our Father tells us to do! But we were watching . . .

So, anyway, when they got close to the tomb they saw the stone had been moved. And then they saw that Jesus' body wasn't there. And they were perplexed, confused, dumbfounded, speechless, paralyzed . . . and that's when our Father allowed us to appear to them, looking like **two men in dazzling apparel**. We frightened them - we didn't mean to! That's why we appeared as men, not in our full-out angelic battle gear! But still, I think you can understand their reaction as they fell down with **their faces to the ground** before us . . .

And that's when we got to tell them the good news!

***Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.***

Now Jesus had taught that a number of times. But it didn't sink in. They didn't want to believe that He would be crucified, and they couldn't believe He would rise. But as we told them - and you see what we did there? We directed them off themselves and the pain and the trouble and the sadness and the death to the Word of God! And when we did . . . we could see them remembering . . . and we could see them beginning to realize . . . we could see the Holy Spirit working faith in their hearts through this Word of God we spoke, just as He did to Mary when Jesus was conceived in her . . .

So with that, they ran back to the others, to the eleven, to tell them. Next thing I know, here's comes Peter sprinting down the path towards us (though he couldn't see us), and he poked his head into the tomb and **saw the linen cloths by themselves** - no body in them anymore! And he **marveled**. He believed but he didn't believe . . . he thought but he didn't think . . . he wondered, he remembered, he hoped . . .

I wanted to grab him by the shoulders and shake him and tell him what happened and that it was all true! But that's wasn't for me to do. Our Father had another plan.

*Jesus Himself* would do that for Peter and the others, Sunday evening. You're going to hear that story next week!

But while I couldn't tell Peter, I can tell you! It's all true! **Jesus dead, Jesus buried, Jesus risen and alive!** And I know you know that. That's why you're here. But maybe, still, you're like the women, and like Peter . . . confused, afraid, a mixed-up jumble of belief and unbelief, your heart saying one thing and your mind another. Your heart, your faith, telling you to be one way, but your sinful nature pulling you in another. Your faith telling you one thing, but so much of what you see in the world and in your life making you wonder and doubt. Wars and hate and division, cultural chaos, emptying churches, fractured families and marriages, things seeming to always be going in the wrong direction . . . And you see it so much, that's what you've come to expect. You expect sin, not forgiveness. Hurt, not healing. Disappointment, not fulfillment. Evil, not good. Death, not life.

But that's what makes today so great! Because it is completely different than the expected! Here's is everything you need, accomplished by Jesus **for you**. And as I said before, if Jesus can bring and work good from cross and death and the grave, He can bring and work good in your life as well. *Whatever* it is you're going through. Even though you look and see no hope, remember what brought the women and Peter hope - **not seeing, but God's Word!** The Word of God that I got to speak to them! That Jesus had fulfilled all the words and promises of God **for you**. That not only *He* lives, that not only *He* rose to life, but that *you* do, too.

And that's what the apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth - words that I heard read to you this morning. When he said, ***If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*** Now, there's a little word in that sentence that is really important. Do you know what it is? The word *only*. You see, some people just want their religion to make their life better and easier *now*. But Paul says (basically), that stinks! What good is that? Because how long are you going to live here and now? 70, 80, 90 years? And then what? If that's true, well that's just like fattening up the sheep for the wolf!

But that's not what Jesus is about. Jesus is about life that is eternal. About life risen from the dead. If your faith is only about here and now, he says you are to be pitied! There's so much more than that. And Jesus has more for you.

But that doesn't mean Jesus doesn't care about your life here and now. He certainly does! But here's the thing: remember that earlier I told you that when you look at yourself and the sin and hurt and pain, **you magnify it?** And when you look at Jesus and His forgiveness and healing and joy, **you magnify those?** Well, that's what's going on here! Paul says don't fixate on the here and now - fix your eyes on Jesus.

**For eyes focused on the victory help you live now in the struggle.**

Because as hard as things might be now, you know the end of the story. You know how it will all turn out. Oh, I know, sometimes you forget. Sometimes your eyes are blinded, like the women and Peter and the others. My evil *former* brother does that. Distracts you, blinds you, confuses you . . . keeps pointing our shiny evil objects and hurts . . . See? I'm winning! See? God doesn't care! See? You'er going down!

But that's why Easter - *and all Sundays* - are so important! Every week, they re-focus your eyes on Jesus and the victory. And that's why we come - me and my brother angels - to be with you every Sunday. Did you know that? *We* do, because *Jesus* does! And wherever Jesus is, we are. You just can't see us, like the women on that Easter morning. But one day, you will. One day, when Jesus comes back - not from the dead, but in glory - you'll see us! Oh, that'll be a day even greater than that first Easter! Because on that day, ALL the dead will be raised, and all sin, death, and evil done. Only Jesus, only good, only joy, all the time!

So here's an idea: on that first Easter, after the women told Peter and the others that Jesus wasn't in the tomb but had risen from the dead, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to see for himself. Be like that - every Sunday! Jump up and run to church - not to see an empty tomb, **but to be with your risen Saviour**, who is here for you! Here speaking words of forgiveness and life to you. Here feeding you with His Body and Blood. Here giving you life and hope again. Life and hope to sustain you another week in this difficult world, and under the assaults of my evil *former* brother, until that day Isaiah talked about, when Jesus comes again and there will be **a new heavens and a new earth**, and a whole new you, risen from the dead and glorified with Jesus. *That'll* be a great day, don't you think?

**But so is today!** Don't let the challenges and disappointments of life get you down. You have life in Christ. The victory is yours! That's what this day is all about. And because of this day, everyday. That *Christ is risen!* [He is risen indeed! 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.