

I Have Seen the Lord!

Easter Sunday B, March 31, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2,15-29, 1 Corinthians 15:19-26, John 20:1-18

Jesus Christ is Risen Today C360

Now the Vault of Heaven Resounds

I Know That My Redeemer Lives R274

Grace and Peace to each of you this morning from God our Father and from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Three long days. That's how long had passed from the events of Good Friday till now. The disciples probably had the most depressing Sabbath ever. Friday night came, and the remaining disciples gathered together in their hiding place in Jerusalem, terrified that the same religious authorities that had killed Jesus would come after them. And so, trembling with fear, they lit their Sabbath candles and prayed the traditional Jewish Sabbath prayers, wondering if this was the last time that they would pray the Sabbath together. After all, without Jesus, would they even stay together? Or would they slowly, one by one, return home with their dreams of the Kingdom of God crucified on the cross with Jesus?

And while the men were deep in their grief, one of the women of Jesus' group of disciples, Mary Magdalene, decided to go to Jesus' grave. Maybe she simply wanted to go visit her friend and teacher's grave. Maybe she wanted to dress it up a bit now that it was Sunday and the Sabbath was over and it was ok to work.

But whatever the case, Mary went to the tomb early on Sunday morning. Instead of seeing the Roman guard that Pontius Pilate had set on the tomb to prevent any looting of Jesus' body, she saw the whole tomb torn apart. The huge stone that sealed it shut, a boulder really, had been rolled away.

What could this mean? Were the Romans further humiliating the memory of Jesus? Did the religious authorities come and steal the body? Could it be vandals or bandits? In any case, Jesus' body was no longer there. She runs back to tell the disciples, who were still hiding.

Most of them don't do anything, but Peter and John run out to the tomb. Which is interesting in of itself, because in their culture, men don't run. It was seen as undignified. But run they did. And they got there, to find the tomb just as Mary had said. Open, with no Jesus.

But what did this mean? Could it be? Could it be that what Jesus had said about rising from the dead could be true? Then it dawned on them. Three times before, Jesus told them this (Mark 10:33-34)

the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

Is that what happened? Is that why the tomb was empty? And then they left, scratching their heads and wondering what was going on.

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene comes back to the tomb. And do you know what, I have to hand it to this girl. She's the only person in the entire Bible that just nonchalantly

talks to angels. She's just like, "hey bro. You seen Jesus?" She's not scared that heavenly beings are talking to her. She just wants to know where Jesus is.

She finds a man that she thinks is the gardener, and asks about Jesus' body. She just wants her friend to rest in peace.

And then, all she had to say was her name, "Mary." And then she recognized this gardener for who he really was, her Lord. Jesus tells her to go tell his brothers, not his followers, not his disciples, but his brothers, that he will be ascending into heaven soon.

And filled with joy, Mary runs to the disciples, shouting, "I have seen the Lord!"

And when it comes down to it, my friends, that's what Easter is all about. It's not about bunnies or eggs or basketball or baseball. It's not even about family. Easter is about seeing the Lord. Think just a couple evenings ago. On Good Friday, it seemed like all was lost. Jesus had been killed on the cross, and it seemed like all of our hopes and dreams were dead.

But now, after just a couple days, we are seeing the Lord, just like Mary Magdalene. All because the grave couldn't contain Jesus. Just like he said to the disciples, just as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah prophesied, the Messiah rose again, proving once and for all that God has destroyed death as our enemy.

Many people, Christians even, have doubted the truth of the resurrection, or downplayed its importance. The thing is though, this event is the central event of human history. Because everything swings upon this one historical event. And that's exactly what St. Paul is getting at in our first reading from Corinthians. It's a short little reading, but o my is it packed with meaning. Right off the bat in verse 19 he says:

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

And that is 100% true. IF Jesus did not rise from the dead, then this whole Christianity thing is a sham. It would just be a religion that looks at the supposed wise sayings of some dead guy from thousands of years ago. And to be honest, the world has no shortage of religions like that.

But Christ did not stay in the tomb. He rose from the dead after having been in that tomb for 3 days, to be seen by angels, Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, and a couple dazzled Roman Soldiers.

And because Christ is risen, that opens up a whole new realm of possibilities for us. In our first reading St. Paul teaches us about how crucial this is. He recounts how sin, the cause of all suffering and death, entered into the world through the work of one man, Adam. And conversely, he remarks how fitting it is that redemption from those same sins also came from a man, Jesus the Messiah, Son of God.

And what does that mean for us? Well, let's take a look back at our first reading.:

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

In Christ all will be made alive. Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection. That means the it's a sure thing now. Think about the idea of a first fruit. The first apples in a tree or ears of corn in a field, or maybe think of waiting for microwave popcorn to pop. You get the first kernel to pop, that first apple to form. That's Jesus being resurrected from the dead. And then, after that, all of the popcorn begins to go off! That's what the resurrection is like. Someday, there is going to be a mass resurrection just like how the

mass of popcorn all starts to pop in the microwave all at once. It's going to happen, we just don't know when yet. And when that final resurrection happens, what St. Paul said at the end of our first reading will be like. "The last enemy to be destroyed, is death."

Flowery language, right? Here's what that really means in real life terms. I have to thank my friend and fellow LCMC pastor Isaiah Bai for sharing this story. I'll read it to you.

What is Day of Resurrection (a.k.a Easter) all about?

I was visiting a rapidly declining hospice patient on Thursday as the chaplain. After the visit, I informed him that I would be out on a trip and will return in 2 weeks. Full aware that his life on earth would come to a conclusion soon, he looked a little upset, fearing that he couldn't see me again.

And I said, "Easter, the Day of Resurrection is approaching. That day is a reminder that I will see you again, either at your home in two weeks, or in heaven. But we will meet."

That's what the resurrection gives us. The resurrection gives us hope when there is none. Without the resurrection, death is not destroyed, and when it's your time to go, that's it. Do not pass Go. Do not collect 200 dollars Without the resurrection, death is the end of the line for us. But that is not what happened, because Jesus is alive. Instead of being the symbol of Satan's victory, the cross became the symbol of his most crushing defeat.

And that means that we have hope. That man unsure about his own survival that Pastor Bai had visited could have hope that no matter if his earthly body gave out, they would meet again at the resurrection. And the same goes for every one of our loved ones. Because Jesus destroyed the power of death, our tearful goodbyes that we say at

funeral services become a “goodbye for now,” instead of a “forever goodbye.” It means that my grandfather Laverne, that passed away on Easter Monday 8 years ago one day will hug his great-grandchildren again, because Jesus’ resurrection destroyed the power of death. And if that doesn’t give you hope, then I don’t know what does.

That’s what it means for us to “see the Lord” after Good Friday. Just like Mary Magdalene, we witness the impossible happening. Every day of our lives is like Good Friday to us. We see how the world beats us down with the incessant demands that society beats down on us. “Do better. Pull yourselves up. Try harder. Don’t be stupid. Work harder.” All of these demands of the Law crush us and grind our souls closer and closer to death bit by bit. But on Easter, and every day in which we remember Jesus’ resurrection, we can say “Christ is Risen!” And remember what that means for you, that in Christ’s resurrection from the dead, you are made alive.

So, be like Mary Magdalene. Find the empty tomb, and see the angels of God pointing to Jesus. And run up to him. And once you see the Lord, go and tell the others. Run, don’t walk. Be like John and Peter. Run, don’t walk, to the tomb. Look inside and remember what God has told you, that Jesus died on the cross for your sake. But Jesus didn’t only do that, since anyone can die for you. But only Jesus has come back from the grave for you.

And in your darkest times, your Good Fridays, when all hope seems lost, we can all say “Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!.” Alleluia, amen.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, by the resurrection of your Son our Lord Jesus you destroyed the power of death once and for all. Help us to always remember that and

what the resurrection of Christ means for us. Help us to see the Resurrection in our everyday lives and encourage us to run, not walk, to Christ. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our savior and lord, amen.