

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
Easter Sunday  
Mark 16:3  
April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*(Adapted from the sermons from the Lenten and Easter Series God's Gift of Forgiveness, Rev. T. Peperkorn– CPH)*

**Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead and shows to His precious children on this glorious day that His resurrection is our resurrection.**

*“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”* (Mark 16:3). This was the question that the women asked one another that first Easter morn. Their Lord was gone forever. That’s what they thought. Their journey to the grave must have been long and lonely – and don’t forget that on Good Friday these very same women stood at a distance from Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea to see where Jesus would be buried. All of the talk about Jesus as the Messiah seemed cold and dead on their lips. But they wanted to do what was right. They wanted to bring the spices and anoint His body. If He could not live, at least He should die with honor and respect as a great teacher.

We all fight this battle. This battle with death. Sometimes the battle seems to be going well. We’re healthy, the kids are doing okay, and tax season is almost over. God is gracious, and there is much to rejoice about. Other times, though, it seems as though death and Satan are winning. A loved one dies. There’s a sickness that just won’t go away. The economy. Jobs. School. Divorce. Fighting at home. Sometimes the fight is long and the battle hard. Sometimes this earthly strife that we all undergo never seems to end. It can feel as though there is no future, no hope for things to ever get better.

We, of course, are not the first Christians to ever have this battle with Satan and sin and death. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 about those who weren’t certain of the resurrection of the dead. They didn’t know whether the dead would rise. They thought you lived and you died, and that was the end. Paul wrote, *“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”*

But Christ IS raised... and the question that the women asked about the stone will become a moot point once they laid eyes on the place they put Him. Christ IS raised... **He’s Risen, He’s Risen and I Know My Redeemer Lives**... we know, we believe and we sing. When we sing it, we know it and we believe it and we preach it. All this would be useless, as Paul would say, if Christ were not alive. Why have the lilies and why have the banners... why have the pomp and circumstance and the celebration? We know it, believe it, live it and know that it is ours.

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And for poor, weak sinners like you and me that is good news indeed. No, it is the very best of news. We may be like the women at the tomb, ready to prepare the dead body of the Lord with spices. We are ready, at times, to concede victory to death and the grave. But look what our Lord says through King David in Psalm 16,

*For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:10–11).*

The path that we walk this day is the path of life through death. There is no such thing as life for us apart from Jesus' death and resurrection. But with Christ, there is hope. This hope is not a pie-in-the-sky sort of everything-will-get-better hope. No, God founds this hope upon Jesus' death and resurrection for us. David prayed again in Psalm 16:2, "*I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from You.'*"

But what if you believe this path is not for you? What if you believe that Jesus' death and resurrection are not enough, or that you are not worthy of God? To you I say remember St. Paul. Untimely born, out of step with the other apostles, if anyone would have a claim on being unworthy of God's mercy, it would be Paul. He was a persecutor, a murderer by nearly anyone's standards, or the least of the apostles, as he would call himself (1 Corinthians 15:9). Yet God had mercy on him, baptized him, and made him as His own child. King David, from who we read and meditated on many of his penitential psalms this season of Lent, he was an adulterer and a murderer... Yet God had mercy on him and made him as His own child.

This is true for St. Paul, for King David, and it is true for you, dearly beloved. Everything you have and are, all of your good you have, is from God Himself, who gave Himself to you so that you might have hope. He gives Himself to you so that you can actually live, not just survive to suffer another day. This is what we pray in the catechism:

That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. (Small Catechism, Second Article)

We have talked a lot about forgiveness this Lenten journey. We've talked about our need for forgiveness, the destructive effect sin has on our lives, and we have talked about how sin begets more sin all the time. But more important than that, we have heard how God forgives, that He longs to forgive, that His forgiveness covers you, and that His gracious presence in your life is but a foretaste to come of an eternity of fellowship in Him.

So rejoice this day and be glad. The things of this life that weigh you down will pass. God is at peace with you, and you do not need to be afraid of anything that comes your way. **He's Risen, He's Risen and I Know My Redeemer Lives.** That is all that really matters in this life. Believe it for the sake of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.