

Sermon for the Resurrection of Our Lord (Sunrise) – Mark 16:1-20

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O grave, where is your victory?

You swallowed up the Son of God, the Creator of creation. You took His lifeless body in your jaws. You captured God in the flesh. You brought the Creator so low that you stopped His breath. You cut Him off from the light and from the land of the living. You broke Him. You exacted a terrible price, the price of all the sins of men, of the Law's full stricture, upon the sinless and perfect Son of God.

Is that your victory?

No. It is not. For the angel has rolled away the stone and showed the world that the Lord has escaped. Your strength has departed. You, O grave, could not hold Him. Even the guards could not guard Him. It was as though they were dead. It's as if you are dead, O grave, while Jesus lives again, raised alive in the land of the living.

Where is your victory, O grave? Show me! Where is your sting? What has happened to your power? Have you soon forgotten how you made us fear? Don't you claim to be the end of all men? Mustn't we all toil in this thorny place and finally submit to you as our master? Aren't you the ruler of the battlefield, the cancer ward, and the hospice house? Aren't you the constant threat to pregnant mothers? Will you not take us whenever you want, and our loved ones just the same? Don't you claim to make our bodies feel pain, to grow old and weak, to contract disease, and then fail? Don't you strive at all times to take away our dignity?

But we laugh with derision. We mock you. You, O grave, are dead. You, O grave, are empty. You, O grave, have lost all claim on us. Jesus, our Risen King, lives. You have no victory. You have no sting. Jesus Christ is risen out of you and back to us. He has come out as the Risen King to meet His people, as the general back from war, as the father racing toward us – His prodigal sons, prodigal no more. The Lord burst your walls from within, like new wine in an old wineskin. And now you, O grave, who could not hold Him, cannot hold us. On the last day, the dead will rise. You, O grave, have lost!

Everyone who believes in the Risen King, Jesus Christ, the good and the bad, those who kept the fast and those who forgot or were lazy or who just didn't care; everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, whether honored or despised by men, whether rich or poor, whether full of virtue or scandal; to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, eternal life and a place in His kingdom will be given for free. They will come out of you, O grave, in their bodies. Then, the Lord will bestow upon them that which they

didn't earn and don't deserve, but which has been won for them by the sacrificial death of their Crucified King, by His perfect life and by His immaculate grace. Strangely, the last will be first: the sinners will be saints. They will go to their God, with Jesus, into heaven to enjoy there the reunion of the ages.

But you, O grave, will get none of them. You are undone. You have no victory. Your wages have been paid. You are done and finished once and for all. There is no more to ask. There is no more to pay. Your accusations against us have all been stripped away and nailed to a cross with the pledge, "King of the Jews." And by grace, we are Jews. We are sons of Abraham. We are circumcised in the heart, who live by faith and are accounted righteous by grace. We share in the hope and expectation of Abraham, whose king is not you, O grave, but is Jesus Christ, the Risen King.

All men have been reconciled to the Father in the death of Jesus Christ. No one who believes in Him, even if he sleeps, will ever die. Jesus is risen for our justification. He has declared us righteous and holy. He welcomes us to Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar. You can scowl, threaten, and attack, O grave, but you have lost. You are defeated. You are ended. Jesus lives!

So we bury our dead, O grave, only to mock you! We bury our dead, not because they are really dead, but because they live. They are with Jesus. Their bodies sleep while they wait for the resurrection to come. We bury our dead because they have been sealed for the resurrection through the risen body and blood of Jesus, which they received in Holy Communion. Our dead go into you, O grave, only that they might follow Jesus out of you and defeat you.

You think that is victory? It is utter defeat. O grave, you bitter tyrant, Jesus lives! He is our Risen King!

So I ask again: Where, O grave, where is your victory? Where is your sting? They are gone. Jesus lives. And Jesus, alive out of the grave, is here for us—living, risen, in His holy body and His precious blood, that is, the seal of new life, the forgiveness of sins, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, given to us to eat and to drink. We shall never die.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Jesus lives! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠