

The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord
St. Mark 16:1-8
April 1st, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Trembled and Were Amazed

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Every year on the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord I am intrigued by the ending of the Gospel from the Evangelist St. Mark. There is no proclamations of joy among the women who visit the tomb. No “hip, hip, hoorays!” No, “Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!” What we are told is the truth of the matter. “They trembled and were amazed.” “They said nothing to anyone.” “They were afraid.” The reaction is very similar to people at a funeral. Nobody knows what to say. Sure, we can talk about the resurrection of the dead, but at the moment that does not seem pervade our depths of reality; it seems to be something far off that we cannot touch; something too good to be true. I am sure it was the same for these women. They must have been thinking, “There is no way that what the angel said is true.” We even learn in another Gospel that when our Lord + Jesus actually shows up that Mary Magdalene thinks He is the gardener, and wants to know where the body was put, for it could not have possibly been raised from the dead. It was too wonderful; too amazing a thought to think that the Lord could defeat death.

But it is true. He has conquered death. He has conquered the grave. It now has no more power over us. It has no power over those who believe the words of Christ spoken through His servant St. Paul. Death has lost its sting. There is now only life and immortality. The promise of a resurrection from the dead is confirmed in our dear Savior’s resurrection. His resurrection is proof that we, and all the saints in Heaven, will rise from the dead and be given new and incorruptible bodies. We will certainly be made a new creation.

Is that not the promise given to us in our Holy Baptism? That we are a new creation formed by the Holy Ghost out of water and the Word of God. All those who are baptized have this reality. The great thing about Holy Baptism, is that unlike the Lord’s Supper which we receive every Sunday (and on other Festivals), Holy Baptism is a gift of God that needed to happen only once. However, it is a gift of God to which we can go to every day of our lives. Especially when we are troubled by sin, or its consequence, death. For Holy Baptism is the promise that God has done a good work in us to redeem us from death and give us a new life. We daily sin much, but when we daily drown the Old Adam, we can daily arise as a new creation before our Lord God.

The season of Easter might be referred to as the season of Holy Baptism. The whole point of Easter is the resurrection of our Lord + Jesus Christ from the dead. He now has a glorified body. He is

our example. Just as He was raised from the dead, we too, shall rise from the dead on the Last Day. Just as He is given a glorified body, we too, shall be given a glorified body. Just as it is for all the saints in Heaven who have gone before us. This is why the season of Easter is the season of Holy Baptism. It is also the reason why we light this Paschal Candle throughout the Easter season, and also at all baptisms and funerals. For it represents the light that replaces the darkness of sin and decay that was removed at our Holy Baptisms. We now walk in new light and new life on account of our Holy Baptisms. We carry this light with us throughout our life, and even into the grave. But on account of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us, we carry that light with us for all eternity. For the light that we receive, and in reality, this is the case for all candles, because they are a reflection and symbol of it, is the light of Christ in and for us.

The light of Christ dispels darkness, and therefore, it dispels sin. For sin cannot exist where it is exposed by the light. When it is exposed by the light it must be confessed, so that it can be removed, which is why we confess our sins daily, so that the light of Christ might fill us, and push back and destroy the darkness that dwells within us. To be filled with darkness is a scary and frightful thing. To be filled with sin is a scary and frightful thing. Especially when we see no way out of the darkness or the sin.

The women at the tomb were faced with their own mortality. Someone rising from the dead did not happen all the time. Our Lord only raised three people from the dead (besides Himself): Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the son of the widow of Nain. So, it was not something that they expected, which is why they trembled and were amazed. There is no way that this could be true. Death is too powerful an enemy. Sin conquers us every day, we cannot shake off its strong fetters.

This is why I believe there is an element of fear at a funeral. People have to come face to face with their own mortality; with their own sin and the consequences of sin in this life. This is especially true of those funerals for individuals who have no ties to Christianity. And I've had to attend a few of those over the years. The fear is greater, for there is no comforting words of promise of seeing our loved one again. Every thing is just over. There is no hope. There is no comfort. There is no talk about reuniting in Heaven. There is just the end of that person's life.

But, we should have no such fear. For our Lord has opened up the grave, and defeated death. He has conquered sin, death and the power of the devil. He has conquered our enemies, the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. All the things in this life that cause us grief and fear have been conquered by the Lord + Jesus Christ. His heel has crushed the serpent, just as the Lord God foretold it to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This is now our new reality. The old reality has passed away. And when the words of promise are not enough for you, our Lord has provided visible signs to which we can cling to in faith.

He has given us water, so that whenever we see water (when it rains, when we drink it, when we pour into our coffee maker, or take a shower) we can be reminded of our Holy Baptism. We can be reminded that our Lord + Jesus made us a new creation; sinless and spotless before Him. We also have this Paschal candle which represents all Holy Baptisms (along with all candles lit), to remind us that the light of Christ dwells with us.

We also have this holy meal of our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine. This is a weekly (and more) reminder of what our Lord has done for us. It is a reminder that even though Christ died. He died for us. He died that we might have life and have it eternally. Therefore, when we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we remember once more our Lord's sacrifice for us, and we remember that even though He died He gave us the life-giving Sacrament of the Altar to sustain us and give us forgiveness from our sins.

We even have as a visible reminder of the goodness of the Lord, each other. For wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's Name, He is there with them. The fact that we are gathered here today is proof that the Lord is with us. That thought should make us tremble and be amazed, just as the women in the Gospel from the Evangelist St. Mark. It should also cause us to worship with true humility and reverence, for our Lord is not up in Heaven somewhere locked in some closet where we only pull Him out when we want to feel good about ourselves, as is believe by many Reformed church bodies. But, our Lord is truly and substantially present with us. Just as He promised He would be when He promised He would send us His Comforter, the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord is here with us today. Let us worship and adore Him. He has conquered death and the grave. He has given us life and immortality. He has risen from the dead. He is the firstfruits. That means that He was the first to rise from the dead. But, we who are baptized, and all believers in Christ, will rise again on the Last Day and be given new and glorious bodies, and will live with our Lord + Jesus for all eternity in Heaven. Certainly, this is a cause for celebration. The women at the grave may have remained silent, because they did not know at that time what was happening. But, we can lift the veil of silence that has endured throughout the Lenten season, and sing and rejoice and proclaim, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!" In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!