

March 31, 2024  
The Resurrection of Our Lord (Easter Day)  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 16:1-8 (Isaiah 25:6-9)

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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

It is said that Christianity is the only religion in the world that can be proven false. To prove it false, all you have to do is find the dead bones of Jesus.’ All of the false gods of this world have lived and died and are still in the grave. Christ alone has lived, died, and has risen again. Bones from the grave would prove that His corpse is *not* risen from the dead. Some will claim that Jesus had never been laid in the tomb in the first place. But we have eyewitness testimony recorded in Holy Scripture. St Mark writes that Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus in the tomb and rolled a large stone against the entrance and Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw where Jesus was laid. (cf: Mark 15:46–47)

Death was not part of God's original creation, but it entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. They doubted God’s Word and trusted in the lies of the devil and ate from the forbidden tree. Because of their transgression, the curse of sin and death has been passed down to all generations. No one escapes death. Mortality is one hundred percent. Unless Jesus returns really soon, you too will suffer death and be laid in a tomb. St Paul writes:

**“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23)  
**“... the wages of sin is death...”** (Romans 6:23)

But God would not let death and the devil have their way. He would leave the glory of heaven and enter the world as a Baby. He would grow and suffer the same temptations and disappointments as every other human. The Son of God would personally experience human life in all of its wonder and in all of its distress. But He did much more than merely experience the life we live. The sinless Son of God, who didn’t deserve death, also willingly experienced the death that we deserve to die.

***”<sup>21</sup> For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Our God isn’t a God who came:

***“... to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”***  
(Matthew 20:28)

On the day that Jesus was crucified and died for the sins of the world, there wasn’t time to properly prepare His body for burial. Because the Sabbath was beginning, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did the best they could. When the Sabbath was past, at dawn's first light, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, wishing to serve Jesus once final time, packed up their spices and began their journey to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body. They had

forgotten Jesus' promise that He would die and be raised on the third day, so they went to the tomb thinking His dead body was still there. Because, where else would His dead body be?

Caught up in their grief, it wasn't until they were on their way that they began to wonder who would roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. But as they approached the tomb, they saw that the stone had already been moved and the entrance was open. When they look inside, they didn't see the dead body of Jesus but saw a living young man sitting there, dressed in a white robe. They're alarmed. Of course they're alarmed. They go to the tomb expecting to find a dead body – but instead they find a young man, an angel messenger of life who says:

***“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”*** (Mark 16:6–7)

Jesus had told them, but they didn't believe. Three times, Jesus had explained to His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to be delivered over to sinful men who would flog him and kill him and after three days He would rise from the dead. Just three short days earlier on the Mount of Olives, Jesus told His disciples:

***“You will all fall away... But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”*** (Mark 14:27–28)

The disciples should've known what was going on, but they were hiding. The women told no one at first because they were afraid. When they finally got the courage to tell the disciples, St Luke writes that:

***“... [their] words seemed to [the disciples] an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”*** (Luke 24:11)

An idle tale. Either the women were delusional in their grief, or someone is pulling a huge prank. That Sunday afternoon the Emmaus disciples were grieving, and their hopes were crushed because they thought that Jesus was dead, even after the women had told them that He was alive. (cf: Luke 24:13–27) Then when Jesus appeared to the main group of disciples on Sunday evening, they thought they were seeing a ghost. (cf: Luke 24:36–37) And when those disciples in turn told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, he didn't believe it either.

Jesus had told them and seven hundred years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied that this would happen. He said that the Servant of the Lord would suffer and die for the sins of the people. (cf: Isaiah 52:13–53:12) He prophesied that the Lord would then raise his Servant up and prolong his days. He prophesied that:

***“<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth...”*** (Isaiah 25:8)

But Isaiah also said,

***“Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”*** (Isaiah 53:1)

Not all believe the good news. In fact, none of us would believe the good news, if the Holy Spirit had not created within us the faith to believe. Scripture teaches that:

***“... faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*** (Romans 10:17)

It is in the preaching of the Gospel and in the administration of the sacraments that the Holy Spirit creates, nurtures, and sustains faith. And thanks be to God for His Gospel message:

***“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:18)

And thanks be to God that He has worked faith within you, forgiven your sins, and given you the hope of eternal life. You were dead in your trespasses and sins. (cf: Ephesians 2:1–2) You had fallen and could not get up. You were dead in the water. But in the living waters of Holy Baptism, God raised you up to life. You have been raised with Christ.

If Christ had not been raised, you’d still be dead in your sins. Your faith would be futile. And we of all people would be most to be pitied. (cf: 1 Corinthians 15:12–19) But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. His ***really*** is risen. Your sins ***really*** are forgiven. You ***really*** have been given life in his name. There is no better news, there is no greater joy, than to know that tomb is empty, and that Jesus Christ is risen and your life and destiny and your eternal future are tied to His. (cf: Romans 6:3-5)

Martin Luther once wrote:

***“... the blessed resurrection... it is pure joy, because we hear that our greatest Treasure, over which we rejoice, is already in heaven above, and that only the most insignificant part remains behind; and that He will awaken this, too, and draw it after Him as easily as a person awakens from sleep. There will no longer be any grief or suffering, and neither world nor devil will plague and sadden us anymore.*** (LW 28, 115)

The tomb is empty. You have the eyewitness testimony of Holy Scripture written by the prophets and apostles, under the inspiration of God – God’s Word that is the power to change the hearts of unbelievers – the power of salvation for all who believe. (cf: Romans 1:16) It’s a fact that cannot be proven false. Christ was crucified, died, and was buried, bearing all your sins and carrying all your griefs to the cross. He has taken all your sin and iniquities and put them to death in His death.

On the Last Day, Christ will return to empty all the tombs: those who believe to eternal life, and those who disbelieve to eternal death. For all who believe, we will feast on His holy mountain just like Isaiah prophesied in our Old Testament reading. And until that day, there is work to do. The angel told the women to tell Jesus’ disciples the Good News of the Resurrection. You, fellow baptized disciple are likewise called to tell of the Good News of Christ crucified for sinners. He is no longer in the tomb but is risen. He’s no longer waiting in Galilee. He is risen and comes to you right where He promises to be: in the preaching of His Gospel, in the waters of Holy Baptism, and in the eating and drinking of His body and blood, given and shed for you. He comes to you in visible means, Word and Sacrament, giving His precious gifts of grace: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.