

The Resurrection of our Lord – 2021

Isaiah 25:6-9

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Mark 16:1-8

What a fabulous day. The cork which has been put on the church for a year is popping and a geyser of elation spills out into this blessed courtyard. The earth is alive. Our spirits are alive. Life is spreading like a wave over those who have had quite enough of death. The Lord Christ is the architect of this day, the architect of this courtyard, the architect of life. The tomb is no match for our Crucified King. Death lives no more for Jesus strides out of His grave clothes and gives us heaven as our home. Enough of death! God wills that man should live and live eternally. What a fabulous day, what a fabulous setting, what an astounding victory!

Was there ever a doubt? One day you will look upon the face of Christ the King. One day you will look into His eyes and you will see God, you will see the One you love and worship, the One to whom you pray and the One you have doubted. You doubt. You doubt for you are sinful, imperfect, worldly in heart and mind. One day you yourself will see the rich wounds in His hands, you will see the divinity of His visage and you will look in His eyes. When you do your heart will rejoice, your spirit will soar and your mind may well think – why, oh why, did I ever doubt this One? Of course, He had my life in His hands! Of course, all things are governed by His will, His good and pleasing and perfect will! One day there will be no doubt, no pensive plan for personal protection. How many of y'all thought yesterday: "Maybe Christ's church will celebrate Easter tomorrow or maybe we won't?" Was there ever a doubt?

The women who went to the tomb early on Sunday morning weren't expecting to celebrate the resurrection. They carried spices to anoint a corpse. Morticians; these mournful women were going to perform the tender service one renders to the dead. Death riddled their hearts and minds. Such a death; such violence, such cruelty, such finality – evil had seemingly marshalled all available resources and launched them at the Son of God. That is true. There has never been a death like this. Satan spent his rage against God on this lone Individual. Jesus, in His humility, was subject to Satan's rage, subject to the cruelty of man's hate, subject to the injustice of an authoritative state. Believers, men and women, followers of the Lord, they had their minds seared with death. Gone were His promises. Gone was His teaching of the Third Day. Gone was their hope. The women who went to the tomb early on Sunday morning weren't expecting to celebrate the resurrection.

Was there ever a doubt? Do you think that there was a chance that *maybe* Jesus would rise from the dead and maybe He wouldn't? Do you think that that means anything for us who live in this day, this era of the church, this year of our Lord? Here are a few biblical examples, instances where what Jesus told His disciples came to pass, precisely as He said. As Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He sent two of His disciples to fetch a colt, a foal of a donkey. He described the circumstance with great detail, uncommon detail, crazy precision. St. Luke tells us: "So those who were sent went away and found it **just as he had told them**" (Luke 19:32). We're not told who these two were but what do you suppose their reaction was? Was it no big deal or did they look at each other in wonder, in amazement, in joyful disbelief? Was there ever a doubt? When it came time for the Passover, His disciples asked Him where they

should prepare it for Him? Silly question, but that's what they asked. Jesus described where they should go, who they would meet, an unusual circumstance, with great detail. Again, two disciples; St. Mark tells us this: "And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it **just as he had told them**, and they prepared the Passover" (Mark 14:16). Was there ever a doubt?

Here's what He says to you: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Let there be no doubt, we find it just as He had told us. The women weren't planning on celebrating Easter. He had told them, He had told His disciples without equivocation, time after time – after three days, I will rise (Matthew 12:40, 16:22, 17:22-23). Death, not life, was all that was in their minds as they trudged to the tomb (we would have been the same). And then, in a moment, in a sterling and pristine and delightful moment, all that was gone; gone! "He is not here, for he has risen, (just) as he said" (Matthew 28:6). What a sea change! What a reversal! Were Jesus' promises still limp in their minds? Did they widen their eyes and grin with delight? Did they look at each other and let out an organic shout? Did they believe that Pontius Pilate or the Pharisees or the dark forces of evil were still in charge of the world, in charge of their lives?

How many of y'all believe that man is pretty much the same as he ever was? That humanity, men and women, are more or less the same as God created us? How many of y'all believe that computers have changed us, or rapid transit or Netflix or indoor plumbing or Darwin or putting a man on the moon or Mario Kart has actually changed the nature of what it means to be human? Have crosses changed? Difficulties in life I mean, marital strain, rebellious children, lack of employment, disease, war, insecurities great and small – have our crosses changed? Has faith changed?

There was a gentleman who was born in 1607 in Germany. He lived through the Thirty Years War; his town was reduced to rubble (is it possible that some of those towns celebrated Easter outside?). In that time, from 1618-1648 up to 60% of the population in what is modern Germany and central Europe died from disease or starvation. This fellow lost 4 of his 5 children in their infancy, and ultimately, his beloved wife. He was a pastor, and at one point he got pitched out of his position because he would not renounce the Formula of Concord, one of our Lutheran Confessions. That old boy wrote these lines:

Why should cross and trial grieve me? Christ is near With His cheer; Never will He leave me.
Who can robe me of the heaven That God's Son For me won When His life was given?
Now in Christ, death cannot slay me, Though it might, Day and night, Trouble and dismay me.
Christ has made my death a portal From the strife of this life To His joy immortal.

You will never be without your crosses. Easter changes the way we manage them. Easter changes the way we look at life; Easter changes the way we live. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). Our risen King leads us in triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 2:14). Humanity has not changed. We are sinners who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. There was never a doubt. God's enormous love for His creation set in motion the gift of this day. When God created Adam from the dust of the earth and Eve from one of Adam's ribs there was no doubt. When Abraham found a ram caught by its horns in a thicket and Abraham offered the ram instead of his son there was no doubt. As the Israelites were protected from death that swept through Egypt, huddled in their homes protected by the blood of

a lamb, painted around their doors there was no doubt. As the Israelites walked through the Red Sea on dry ground there was no doubt. As Daniel was left unharmed in a den of lions there was no doubt. As Jesus hung, pierced and pinned to a cross, there was no doubt... God is committed to you. All the force of those days has come into this courtyard as we celebrate the resurrection.

The Son of God took upon Himself your sin and He atoned for it. He paid the price. All your guilt, all your shame, all your iniquity – He bore it in His fully human body and on that fearsome day, God punished sin. Death came to Christ. He willingly took it. And death was undone. For in Jesus was a holiness so intense and radical and true that death died in His divine flesh. Was there ever a doubt? God had designed this triumph from eternity. And the beauty of it fills this assembly. Christ is risen. That is the context in which you live. Whatever we face, that will not change. Strength and courage are born of this reality and we stand with His promises alive in our hearts. The promise of Christ is alive in Tyler Erickson. Jesus looked Tyler in the eye and poured out the bounty of His blood as Tyler was baptized. New creation! Heaven is our home! What a fabulous day. The cork which has been put on the church for a year is popping and a geyser of elation spills out into this blessed courtyard. The earth is alive. Our spirits are alive. Life is spreading like a wave over those who have had quite enough of death. Christ is arisen.