

IN NOMINE JESU
CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER

He is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Hear again the Word of God for this Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord:

For indeed Christ our Passover was killed.¹ Then he says to them, "Do not be awestricken! Jesus Whom you continue to seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified; He has been raised, He does not remain here!"²

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Christ died as the Final Passover Sacrifice that eternal death – separation from the living God – may pass over you. Christ rose from death as God’s visible proclamation that you too, should you die, will rise again to new life. Those realities have been publicly affirmed in the confessions of the children who received the Rite of Confirmation last night. We now know that they can speak clearly in a simple way, the truths we hold as a congregation. In particular, this day, our confession about the death and resurrection of Jesus resounds through the readings:

I believe that... in this Christian Church [God] daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day He will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ.

For God’s congregations like ours, that reality is not reserved for a one day or even one season message. It permeates the Divine Services as the Lord declares His forgiveness for sinners. That was sealed on the Cross by Jesus, and declared before the Creation in His resurrection. Every Sunday the congregation participates in the

¹ I Corinthians 5:7.

fullness of the life of Christ – in the remembrance of Holy Baptism that comes from the Invocation; in the Confession that recalls Jesus’ bitter sufferings and death; in the Absolution that is given by the living and reigning Christ; in the Church’s regular confession of the ancient ecumenical Creeds; in the fruits of the sacrificed and now living Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. For us the death and resurrection of Jesus is ever declared in Word and Sacrament, and cannot wear thin, or wear out, for it is God’s reality.

Yet, this day, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit working in the ancient Christian Church, the Resurrection of our Lord takes primacy of place. This, in the Church, is to be The High Feast, The One greater than all other Church holy days. This is the first and prime festival of the early Christian Church, pre-dating all others. In this day we especially remember that Jesus was raised from the dead on account of our justification.³ This day we remember Jesus who became our righteousness.⁴ That means that you, dear ones in Christ, are declared right with the Father as you remain in Jesus. Because you have received from Christ the right standing with God, you may be continually assured that He has freed you from death and all the punishments of sin, and that you are saved eternally.⁵ That is why these two passages were chosen to be paired this day for our theme:

For indeed Christ our Passover was killed.⁶ “Do not be awe-stricken! Jesus Whom

² Mark 16:6.

³ Romans 4:25b.

⁴ cf. I Corinthians 1:30.

⁵ cf. Formula of Concord, 2, V, 20.

⁶ I Corinthians 5:7.

you continue to seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified; He has been raised, He does not remain here!”⁷

This is a big day in the life of the Church. You, as members of Catalina Lutheran Church, have had the opportunity to hear God’s Word with increasing intensity over each day of the past week. The reason we offered eleven worship opportunities in the seven days leading to this Divine Service is that, pastorally, we desired to give you as many opportunities to hear the Word regarding the Second Article of the Creed as we were able. We did so that you might better appreciate, respect, and rejoice in this High Feast. For those who heard and studied them, we have learned that all the Holy Week readings build up to the summary texts of this Divine Service’s theme:

For indeed Christ our Passover was killed.⁸ “Do not be awe-stricken! Jesus Whom you continue to seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified; He has been raised, He does not remain here!”⁹

On the first day of the Week following the High Feast and Sabbath of the Jews, in the year we number AD 33, the first part of our theme was becoming known to the former disciples of Jesus, both male and female. They knew, before they departed for the Garden Tomb, that Jesus had been killed. They understood that His death had occurred during the Great Feast days, and that His body had been hastily buried before the setting of the sun that began the High Sabbath that year. Do you think though, that they knew and understood in the breaking day’s light that Christ

⁷ Mark 16:6.

⁸ I Corinthians 5:7.

Jesus had been killed as their Passover?

There is nothing in the text to indicate that they knew that reality that we hold so dear today. Their lack of Holy Spirit revealed knowledge about the Christ is a major reason the Gospel reading ends with these words:

Then going out, they fled from the tomb, for they had trembling and bewilderment; and to no one nothing they said, for they feared!"¹⁰

For years, we have had the Gospel end at that point in the day's readings. It almost seems and oxymoron to end with, "for they feared;" and follow it immediately with, "this is the Gospel of the Lord!" It is somewhat amazing that no one has come up in the past few years to the preaching pastor of the day to ask why the text ends there. (I would like to believe that it is because we explain the text so well – but I try not to be that foolish)!

Truly, though, the Gospel ends with those words this day for several reasons. First, this ending of Mark is one of the oldest we have. There are longer endings, found in most English translations, but they are later additions. (They are usually annotated in some form or another in your Bibles. That does not make the longer endings of Mark bad. For even they do not change any foundational doctrines of Scripture).

Second the Gospel ends with those words because these services usually end before the rest of the events of that first Resurrection Day occurred. Think of this

⁹ Mark 16:6.

as a timing issue – the ancients wanted to keep the reading to the time frame of the Day in which the events occurred – and we find their decision helpful. The short ending for this day helps to remind us who have the fullness of the New Testament how much the first witnesses of the Resurrection of our Lord had to learn, digest and believe. We can mentally understand their predicament – an empty tomb, no body about, angelic messengers – and apply their thoughts to ourselves when we fail to grasp the mysteries of God the first time! Consider this in light of this service’s texts – if God in Christ was patient with those eye-witnesses to His miracles, including His death and resurrection, then He will be merciful to us who so often fail to grasp His truths, such as those revealed in our theme texts:

For indeed Christ our Passover was killed.¹¹ “Do not be awe-stricken! Jesus Whom you continue to seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified; He has been raised, He does not remain here!”¹²

What does that mean for you?

It means that Christ died for your sins, and was raised again from the dead that you might know that you who have died with Christ are declared right with God. (Remember the Old Covenant Passover Lamb was given to the people to consume). That was a foreshadowing of the Promise that comes most intimately when you eat of the New Testament Passover Lamb – that is the flesh and blood of Jesus who died, and who rose from the grave. For in that Feast you have assurance not only that your sins

¹⁰ Mark 16:8.

¹¹ I Corinthians 5:7.

¹² Mark 16:6.

are forgiven, but that you are being strengthened to eternal life. That means that the ancient confession of Job may become your confession: *I know My Kinsman Redeemer lives...and from my flesh I will see God.*

For the one who partakes of the Redeemer in Word and Sacrament, the words of the angel now ring out. He speaks to you who are so often troubled on account of your sins, or the tribulations of this world, or the temptations of the devil. *“Do not be awe-stricken,”* fear not, he says, for Jesus has won the victory. The grave could not hold Him. Thus the angel speaks to anyone who looks in the empty tomb for the body of Christ:

Jesus Whom you continue to seek, the Nazarene, the One having been crucified; He has been raised, He does not remain here!”¹³

He has bought you back from sin, the fallen creation, and rescued you from the old evil foe. Christ has arisen from death’s dark sleep as God’s eye-witnessed testified proclamation that you too, should you die, will rise again to new life. That is why these words will ring out here over the next 40 days in the Lord’s Services:

He is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Resurrection Hauptgottesdienst (LSB One-year series)

Job 19:23-27; I Corinthians 5:6-8; Mark 16:1-8

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

¹³ Mark 16:6.