

Sermon Transcript Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The women saw the stone in front of the tomb. I don't know if they were even thinking clearly like, "What are we going to do? There's a big stone there. We'll just look at the stone and hope something happens." The disciples are hiding. They're in a locked room. I mean, confusion and chaos everywhere, but Jesus brings it home. See, the angel says, "Go to Galilee and Jesus will see you there." But you notice Jesus shows up right away? It's as if He's saying, "Yeah, I know I had a plan that we'll see you in Galilee, and I will be there in Galilee when you get there. However, I can't wait that long."

It's like me with giving gifts. I buy the gifts and they're supposed to be for a special occasion, but I end up giving them a week later, or the day I buy them, because I just can't contain myself, "Oh, I bought you a gift. I know it's for your birthday, which is two months away. But here's a gift." It's that gift that is so exciting you just can't but give. And so, Jesus says, "Yeah, I'll see you in Galilee. However, I want to talk to you now because I know you need to know this. This is good stuff." And so, Jesus meets the two ladies as they're running back to tell the disciples. And they come and they bow at His feet and they worship Him.

Now, notice, they worship Him and He doesn't tell them to get up. That means that Jesus Himself is something other than the angels. Every single time an angel shows up, everybody bows down because they're afraid. And every angel has to say, "Get up. Stop worshiping me. I'm not God." But when Jesus shows up glorified, risen from the dead, they bow down and they worship and He leaves them there, because that's the proper place to be, is to worship and to praise God for His marvelous gift. And He says, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Now, go and tell My brothers, that struck me. We read Psalm 22 when we stripped the altar, and Psalm 22 is what Jesus was quoting when He said, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" And the first six verses or so are all about the agony, and the pain, and the suffering that He goes through. And He did, indeed, suffer on the cross and we do not, we cannot forget that. Paul himself says, "Even though I persecuted the church and I'm unworthy to be called an apostle, God's grace is upon me and He allowed me the joy of working for the Gospel." But he understood that he did not deserve it. And even afterwards, it was not him that did the work, but the Holy Spirit in him.

A couple of things we need to remember. We still, even on this Easter morning, confess our sins. Because we do need to remember that we have fallen short of the glory of God in thought, word, and deed, that we have not worked and toiled for the Gospel as hard as we ought to have. We've not been an example of a good Christian at all times. We've fallen short. We've said things that we should not have. We haven't said a few things that we should have. We've done some things we're not proud of, and we definitely thought a bunch of stuff that we don't want anybody else to hear.

But even then, even though we are unworthy like Paul, God had mercy and grace upon us. We've been talking about this Divine Service since Holy Thursday, that God serves us with His body and blood on the altar. He serves us. He serves us with His death. What's the whole point of Jesus dying, but to serve, to give us

something that we do not deserve. And here again, the Divine Service where He promises us that death is not in control anymore and we have nothing to fear.

All of these things are the service of God to us. It doesn't make any sense. This is insane. The God of the universe serves us. The God of the universe does everything, including the spreading of the Gospel. Because it's not Paul, but the Holy Spirit working through Paul. It's not me preaching, Patrick Poock, it's the Holy Spirit working in and through me to proclaim to you the Word of God. I, Paul, all the disciples, everybody, we don't get any credit. It's all God working in and through us. He gets all the glory. He gets all the praise. It's all Him serving us, and through us, serving others. Even when we serve others and do good works, it's God working in and through us for them, to serve them. It's all about the Divine Service. God serves us, not because we deserve it, but simply because He loves us, and He wants us to be in His family. What a glorious thing that is, it's just incredible.

But I was getting back to Jesus telling, go and tell My brothers, and Psalm 22. It begins with that, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me," and then focuses upon the pain and the suffering of Christ. And then it goes through and describes exactly what's going to happen, that His hands and His feet are going to be pierced. That people will mock Him. That His clothing will be divided, and His garments will be cast, lots will be cast for, and all of this other stuff that is prophesied in Psalm 22. At the very end of it though, it says, "And He will tell His brothers that He has done it." Here we have it, Jesus completing the Psalm. Started on the cross with His pain and suffering, following through to His death and burial. And finally, in His resurrection, He tells His brothers what has been accomplished, the salvation of our souls, the defeat of death itself.

What does the Psalmist say here in Psalm 16? For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption. Even in death, God will not abandon us. He does not and He will not. Throughout this entire COVID issue that we've been going through, God has not abandoned us. And those who have died from this, or anything else for that matter, are with Christ. Those who call upon His name are with Christ and no longer suffering and are free. When Paul talks about those who saw Christ, five hundred brothers, He appeared to them at once. And what does Paul say? He says, "Most of them are still alive, though some have fallen asleep." Notice Paul doesn't say they've died. They're dead, dead as a doornail, as you might say. No, he doesn't use the language of the finality and the severity of death. He said they've fallen asleep.

What's that? I fall asleep every night. I'm not afraid of it. So, Paul is equating sleep and death for those who call upon the name of the Lord. I mean, what was God doing in the tomb? He was resting and proclaiming His victory, so He might come forth and share that with us. The tomb has nothing for us to be afraid of. That's the whole point. We don't need to be afraid of tyrannical rulers. We don't need to be afraid of war. We don't need to be afraid of famine, or pestilence, or anything else that affects this world, because God has conquered it all, and He will not abandon us, not even in the grave. Because if Christ was risen as the first fruits, and He adopted us in our baptisms and made us sons and daughters of the Most High God, God doesn't let His sons and daughters dwell in death.

He brings us to life with Him, and we are just here having a foretaste, a little glimpse, a little bit of the joy. The Alleluias that we sing out, the glories and praises that we have, the bread and the wine and the body and blood that we receive, the fellowship of fellow believers is just a taste, a small taste of what it will be like

when Christ comes again. And just like we celebrate this resurrection day, we look forward with celebration, and anticipation, and joy, for the day to come when we will be with Him forevermore, and we will enjoy that great feast filled with wine, and new wine, and great food, and wonderful fellowship, and the glory of God, and every tear wiped away, and every pain gone, and every sorrow corrected, for God has risen from the dead and He has promised you, you also will rise with Him to new life.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. May His grace and His mercy and His peace and His Risen Savior be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, Amen. Because He is risen.

He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!