

Sermon Transcript for Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. He is risen!

He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Now what does that mean, that He is risen? As I was singing this last hymn, "Awake My Heart with Gladness", I noticed something that also reminded me of what Paul said. In the first verse, it says, "Now after gloom and sadness comes forth the glorious sun, my Savior there was laid where our bed must be made. When to the realms of light, our spirit wings its flight."

So where are "our beds to be made"? Where is that, "our beds to be made"? That is the tomb. See the one thing that we need to remember, and probably one of the most important things we need to remember about the resurrection of Christ from the dead, is that because He has died for all, we all have died in Christ.

Therefore, when we were brought into the family of God in our baptisms, the old Adam was drowned and died. That was the death that we experienced. You all have died already. So now you don't need to worry about death because it's already happened to you. You are now alive in Christ, and the grave is no longer a fearful place, but it is a bed where you lie to rest. Because what do you do in a bed? You go to sleep and then you wake up in the morning. That is what the grave is. You go to sleep and you wake up and where do you wake up? In paradise with Christ, with all the angels in heaven, with all the heavenly hosts, with all of those who call upon the name of the Lord, God almighty there in the presence, seeing Him face to face, living forever without any tears, or pain, or sorrow, or heartache anymore. We are free.

When Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, you have believed and Jesus appeared to Cephas, to the 12 and then to 500 brothers at one time. Most of whom are still alive, though some have "died"? No. Some have "fallen asleep". See, whenever He talks about those who believe in Christ, when He connects them with death, it's "they have fallen asleep". When He talks about those who do not believe, who have not heard the Word of God, who have not trusted in the Lord, they have died. But those who have trusted in the Lord have fallen asleep.

We are free from the fears of death. We are free. We are part of a new kingdom. When I talk about every Sunday, when we begin with the invocation, we begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that is to connect us and to remember and to reexperience our baptisms. We are to go back to our baptisms and remember that in Christ, we died in the waters of baptism and we were brought to new life.

Not only were we brought to new life, we were brought into a new nation, a new kingdom, a new family. We are adopted as sons and daughters of Christ. What does that mean? It means that our inheritance is with Christ. And what is the inheritance of Christ? It is the kingdom of God so we have now membership in the kingdom of God. That is where our citizenship lies. That is our true home. We are now sojourners in this world. We're on a long journey, but we're not home. We're looking forward to the time.

How often is it when you go on a long journey at first, it's very exciting and thrilling? But after a while, you begin to long for the comforts of home. You begin to long for that place where you feel at peace, that place where you can rest. How often do you come home from a vacation and say, "Man, I need a vacation from my vacation?" Because you're constantly doing stuff and moving around and seeing everything that you need to see. Then you get home, and you're like...Ahhhhh.

That is where we are right now. We are busy doing the work of the Lord. We are in this world, serving Him every day, and there's a lot to be done, but it's not us that does it. It is the Spirit that does it within us. So even though we are weary in our travels, in our tasks, we can turn to the Lord and trust that even now we get rest.

It's interesting that Jesus died on a Friday, and then what did He do on the Sabbath? He rested. He rested from His labors and so even Christ took a time of rest. Just like on the first six days of creation, God created everything, and on the seventh day, what did He do? He rested from His labors. Then on the eighth day or the first day of the next week, on the eighth day, He began again to work within us. On the eighth day, Christ rose from the dead and began the work of salvation for all of us, and we now live in the eighth day, the new day.

Eight days are not part of the week. That eighth day is separate. It is new. It is part of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is always the eighth day, the day of rest, the day of celebration, the day of joy and thanksgiving.

I noticed another thing as I was reading this Gospel. Every place else in the entire Old Testament, and even in the first part of the New Testament, whenever any angels show up, what's the first thing that everybody does? They bow down in abject fear, and the first thing the angels have to say is, "Don't be afraid." But here, Mary sees the angels in the tomb and she sees the angels, but she's not afraid. It's interesting. I'm not quite sure what to make of it, but I find it interesting that when the angels show up after the resurrection, it's as if we have peace with God because of Christ, and now Mary does not need to be afraid of the angels, or of the presence of God, or anything else because the curtain has been torn. Access to God is now open, and she has no need to be afraid. She may not fully understand what that means, obviously. She's weeping, but she still has received that benefit. We no longer are afraid of the wrath of God that is rightfully ours. We are no longer afraid that our sins will consume us. We are able to stand firm in the Gospel through which we are being saved.

See, because He has swallowed up the mountain that covers, that is cast over the people. What is that mountain of the covering that is cast over the people of God? It is the weight of sin, the weight of the knowledge that we have rebelled against God in thought, word and deed. And yet Christ has swallowed up death forever. I like that imagery. He swallowed it up. You can't see it anymore. It's gone. And, as a result of that, God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth. Why? Because the Lord has spoken. He has said, "It is finished." The judgment of mankind has been accomplished, and we are free. Behold, this is our God. We have waited for Him that He might save us, and He has indeed saved us.

Now in our introit and this is actually a prophecy of the Messiah at the very end. "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption." Already in the Psalms we hear God promising that our Lord and Savior will not rot in the tomb. But we also hear that we shall not rot in the tomb because the tomb is not death, but rest. If we've already died in Christ and we are alive through the waters of baptism and the death of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, let us live in the joy of our salvation, the knowledge that we are at peace with God, that when God shows up, no longer need to bow down in fear. We can look upon the face of our Savior and be at peace because He has risen. He has risen, indeed. Alleluia!

May His grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.