

Easter 2019  
April 21, 2019

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

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be with you. Grace and peace be with you on this the most joyful day of the entire Church year. Grace and peace be with you. Amen!

Happy Easter!

Today we are gathered here to celebrate that the tomb is empty! The tomb that held the dead body of Jesus is empty! He is not there! He is, in fact, risen from the dead. Jesus is alive and he is on the move!

Two thousand years ago, it was assumed that death was the end of the story, the end of our story, the end of our story with God, but in the resurrection God proclaims to us that our story has no end. It does not end with death, but continues in the resurrection. Our story is God's story and it is eternal. It does not end with death.

Grace and peace be with you! Our relationship with God is eternal.

Often when someone dies, we ask ourselves, "what does this mean for me? What will my future look like without this person?"

As the women approach the tomb, I'm sure that's what they are contemplating - what does Jesus' death mean for me? What would their future look like without their beloved rabbi. Where would they go? What would they do? Who else would treat them as valuable members of the community?

And, I'm sure, all of the disciple locked up in a room had to be wondering the same thing, "what does Jesus' death mean for me, for us, for the future of his movement? What are we going to do now?"

They had all forgotten what Jesus had told them. Jesus told them at least three times that he would be killed, buried, and then rise on the third day, but who had ever heard of such a thing? It was ludicrous. With death, the story ends.

But God says, "NO! The story does not end with death, because death is temporary. But life, life is eternal, because God is life!"

Life is eternal. It cannot be destroyed.

Grace and peace be with you!

Before that first Easter, the question would be, “what does death mean for me?” But now, the question is, “what does resurrection mean for me?” What does it mean that our relationship with God can never be severed? What does it mean that our story is eternal, because it is connected to Jesus and his resurrection? What does it mean?

Well... I’m not going to tell you. That is for you to figure out for yourself.

On that first Easter, the women were perplexed. The disciples flat out didn’t believe. And, Peter was amazed.

Initially no one knew what it meant. For us, it can take an entire life time to figure out. But, that’s ok, because in the resurrection we know that God will never leave us – ever. That is God’s promise and God never goes back on a promise. God is always faithful, even when we are not. That’s what the empty tomb is all about.

Back in Luke 22:31, Jesus told Peter that Peter would turn back to him after deserting him. Jesus told him that he would repent and go back to him. This was well before Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

Today is the day that Peter turns back to Jesus, and he is amazed! What Jesus promised him would happen, happened! Resurrection and his turning back.

In 24:12, Peter returns to the Lord. He runs to the empty tomb after hearing the good news from the women. And after a short trip home, we later hear how he saw Jesus in the flesh and then shared that good news with the others, who will later see Jesus for themselves and also come to believe.

After realizing Jesus promise had come true, Peter does as Jesus told him to do. He goes to the disciples and strengthens them in their faith.

Peter responds to the good news by sharing the good news, just as the women had done before him. And we continue the proclamation of that good news today.

God doesn’t give up on us. God knows us, loves us, and will never leave us, and because of that, God also knows that we will always return to him, eventually, and he is there with open arms, happy to be reunited with us.

And if we remember back to Jesus' first encounter with Peter, way in the beginning of Luke, we will recall that Peter was terrified after having pulled in an entire boat full of fish after Jesus directed him to lower his nets onto the other side of the boat. In that encounter, Peter begs Jesus to leave him alone, for he is a sinful man. But instead of leaving Peter alone, he takes Peter on the adventure of a life time.

Sin does not keep Jesus away from us. It actually seems to attract Jesus to us. Jesus is constantly seeking out sinners so that he can bring them back into God's family. Sin doesn't keep God away from us.

God is always faithful to us, always, even when we are not faithful to God. That is the good news of the resurrection. That is the good news of the empty tomb. Nothing can separate us from God's love – not sin, not death, not a thing. There is no wall we can build that is strong enough to contain Jesus or keep him from searching us out.

We killed Jesus, but Jesus burst through the constraints of death to be reunited with us, because God loves us.

Most people think about how the women and disciples felt about losing Jesus, but few of us stop to think about the great pain Jesus felt at having to leave us, even though he knew it was temporary.

God loves us, and it pains God to be without us. So God destroys everything that separates us from God – sin and death – so that we will eternally be connected to God – no matter what.

Happy Easter!

Your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life with your creator.

Grace and peace is with you.

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

Thanks be to God! Amen.