

The Resurrection of Our Lord AD 2011



Text: Matthew 28:1-10

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

A story is told about a new pastor who'd just preached his first sermon. Greeting the people after service, maybe over coffee and cake, he asked one of the parish elders, "will it do?" "Will it do what?" was the reply. That is a fair question. Just what is the proclamation of God's

Word supposed to accomplish? This is always a timely question, even more so given that it is Easter, the celebration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead.

What do we want God's Word to accomplish?

- We would love for it crush the spirits of hardened sinners and convert them
- I hope and pray that it encourages and strengthens your faith—that it inspires you
- It should help us praise God
- It should inform us, help us to live holy and abundant lives
- The Word helps us bear witness to Christ

It may just be that the young preacher had nothing to say and thus he said nothing worth hearing, nothing worth doing. Someone has asked, "[is the way we understand Jesus to be raised worth a sermon at all?](#)" Yes it is! But many theologian wanna-bes have so reinterpreted Jesus and diluted his Gospel, that they have re-made him in their own likeness and image. It's an easy trap to fall into; truthfully, I have found myself putting my thoughts and words into Jesus' mouth on occasion.

It is not surprising that some Christians have recast, redesigned Jesus into a Lord of their own desiring; and they would reform his Church into a modern, more social and democratic institution. They could be like Judas, traitors to the cause. They might be well meaning and stupid. They have lost the vision and see no connection at all between the Church and the Kingdom of God. The warnings of Jesus come into play here; there are antichrists and enemies of the Gospel 'out there.' "*Be watchful, the devil prowls about like a lion, seeking souls to devour...*" (1

Peter 5, see also 2 Timothy 3)

“Is the way we understand Jesus to be raised worth a sermon?” Yes it is, yes it is. “Christ is risen.” *Pause* “He is risen indeed! Alleluia.” The way you answered tells me everything. If you answered eagerly, lovingly, excitedly, then I know that preaching a resurrected Jesus is important to you. You get it. If you answered not at all, or in a ‘ho hum’ manner then my prayer is that God would crush your hardened heart, that he would break through the wall that you’ve built up against the Gospel. We pray that the Spirit would work to convert you—bring you to a living and a vibrant faith.

Our message is that sin, a spiritual condition, scars us in our minds, in our souls and *even in our flesh*. God told Adam that the day he sinned, is the day he would die. Sin is rebellion against God, sin is the source of our problems in body and in spirit. If you have trouble with money, sin may be at the root of that problem too! David writes about his sin in Psalm 32, “*when I failed to confess my sin, when I kept silent, then my bones wasted away... and your hand, O Lord was heavy on me, and my strength was dried up.*” Sin takes its toll on our mortal flesh as Oscar Wilde illustrated in *The Picture of Dorian Grey*.

Is the way we understand Jesus to be raised worth a sermon at all? Yes, for as real as death is to each human being on earth, *that real* is the resurrection we proclaim. They’ve got it wrong who think you die and become an angel. And, we’re not talking about a spirit existence in heaven, or reincarnation—Christians are not Hindu. “We look for the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come...” Jesus is “the first fruits.” Whatever we posit about Jesus in life and death is what we believe will happen to ourselves. Faith in the resurrection is Jesus-specific. Jesus Christ, the messiah sent by God breaks ground and leads the way, it is Jesus who opens the Kingdom to all who believe in him.

Death unites us with the women who came to Jesus’ grave that morning, and with all who mourn, and with all who will die. Those women weren’t looking for a miracle; they came to do the work of grieving. They were assaulted by an angel (or two)—their own little apocalypse. It told them what had to be good news, that Jesus *has risen as he said*, and that he goes ahead of them to Galilee... Jesus leads the way.

Now these women are united in a new hope; in the hope of life with Jesus in the kingdom of God. These myrrh-bearing women are united with you and I, and with all who look for the day of his appearing. “*Though we are many, we are one body*”

The NT refers to the resurrection in a passive voice, as Jesus *being raised* from the dead. English, while it has a passive voice, does not like to use it; as a kid and in college I was continually asked to write in an active voice. But the facts are that God (the Father) raised Jesus from the dead. This is seen as his divine approval of all that Jesus (the Son) did. This is the faith of the early church. Jesus doesn't *rise* so much as he *has been raised*.

We complicate things just a bit with the Easter acclamation; “Christ *is risen*.” We are speaking of a present and on-going condition in the passive voice. But, if in the resurrection God can set aside the laws of nature, I don't see why in explaining it, you and I can't set aside the rules of grammar. In daily speech we do much worse.

'Hell took a body, and discovered God.

It took earth, and encountered heaven.

It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see!

--St. John Chrysostom

in Christ...” (Romans 12:5) We are a body with many members. (1 Cor. 12) In the waters of baptism you and I meet Christ who ushers us into his kingdom, and with him we die, we join him in his death and resurrection, and now our lives are hidden with him, in God. (Colossians 3:3) Risen with Christ we are free from the wiles of sin, death and Satan—death has no power over those who are in Jesus Christ.

Is the resurrection worth a sermon?

- It is, if it snatches you from the jaws of hell and delivers you, body and soul, into Christ's Church now (in time) and into the Kingdom (eternity) hereafter.
- It is, if it releases you from selfishness and gives your life a new purpose in Christ.
- It is if it barges into your lonely existence and gives you more brothers and sisters than you can imagine.
- It is if it takes away your fear of death and replaces it with joy and peace, and the “sure and certain hope of resurrection.”
- It is if it takes away your sorrow and replaces it with a palm branch, a white robe and crown, and you suddenly find yourself singing the praises of the Lamb with the countless throng of heaven.

Rev. Stephen Vogt, Pastor
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hamburg, NJ 07419
Poplc-hamburg.org