

Jesu Juva

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives!”

Text: Mark 16:1-8

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*] Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

I Know That My Redeemer Lives (LSB #461) we just sang. We know . . . but those women did not. They went that morning looking for a dead body; *expecting* a dead body - a corpse which still needed its final preparation for a proper burial, for there hadn't been enough time on Friday. Everything happened so suddenly they didn't even have the spices at that time. Now they had bought them and went to that awful place.

They didn't know how they would get to that body - who would roll that enormous stone away, or even if the soldiers would allow such a thing. Even when they get there and find the stone already rolled away, and an angel, appearing as a young man sitting in the tomb tells them the good news of the resurrection, they were too confused to rejoice; they were too astonished to understand or think straight. They simply did not know what was happening or how to put all the pieces together. Death they knew, death gripped their minds and hearts, death and its sadness and grief.

You've been there. You know exactly what they were going through. When you get that phone call telling you a loved one has died. When you stand at the side of a hole in the ground and watch your loved one lowered into it. When you hear of another massacre of Christians in the name of a false god. Death grabs you by the throat. Sometimes its sudden and sometimes drawn out. Sometimes it's expected and sometimes not. Sometimes the dead one is old and wrinkled and sometimes so young. But it always grabs you by the throat. Like those women, death we know, death grips us, death surrounds us, death and its sadness and grief.

But today we look death in the face - death in all its horrible, destructive terror - and say: *I know that my redeemer lives!* As those women and the disciples would soon come to realize, Jesus' tomb was empty not because some grave robber or gardener had come and taken His lifeless body somewhere else, but because death could not hold Him. Death could not hold the one who (as Isaiah said) *swallowed up death*. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and so when Jesus paid the wages of sin in full, atoned for sin in full, then death was stripped of its power and Jesus rose to life again. Death is no longer the terrible, final, unconquerable end for all men and women - **it is now a servant of Jesus Christ!**

Should the women and disciples have known this? At least of Jesus' resurrection? Perhaps. This was all *in accordance with the Scriptures*, Paul said. Predicted and spoken of in the Old Testament. The resurrections of the dead foreshadowed this. The sign of Jonah pointed to this. The Psalms and Isaiah and other prophets spoke of this. Jesus Himself told His disciples *three times* that He would die *and rise again* (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). This was God's plan all along, now, finally, accomplished. Sin, death, grave, satan, and hell all now lay defeated. *For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

And so notice how St. Paul now talks of death. He says that Christ *died* and *was buried*, but after that he says that now *some have fallen asleep*. For that's what death is for us now. It's finality defeated it has been transformed into a sleep for us. And so as we sing in one of the evening hymns in our hymnal: *Teach me to live that I may dread the grave as little as my bed* (LSB #883 v. 3). When you're united to Jesus, you fall asleep in death and wake up in Paradise.

And *you are* united to Jesus. For as we remembered last night, your baptism united you to Christ in His death and resurrection. He joined you in your death to provide for you a resurrection. And He promised it to you in those waters when He gave you His forgiveness and promised you everlasting life. And so when faced with death you can say: *I am baptized!* Death does not own me, Christ does. *I am baptized!* Death is not the end, life is. *I am baptized!* My sin cannot condemn me for Christ forgives me. *I am baptized!* And there is no hell strong enough, no grave deep enough, and no devil terrible enough to separate me from my Redeemer. *I know that my Redeemer lives!* His grave is empty, and so will mine be.

What comfort this sweet sentence gives, the hymnwriter then added. Comfort not only to face death but to live life. To live not afraid of what tomorrow may bring into my life, but knowing that if I have a Redeemer, a Saviour, who has taken care of my greatest need, then He will be with me in all my other needs as well. Or as we've been praying in the Great Litany all through the season of Lent: *In all time of our tribulation and in all time of of our prosperity* (LSB p. 288). Now we usually don't think of needing our Saviour's help in our times of prosperity, though we may acknowledge Him as the Giver of such times and gifts. But maybe it is especially at those times that we need Him and His presence most of all, for how easily can ease and comfort and wealth and success cause us to forget about Him and cause us to cling to these things as false gods; as if our lives depended on them.

But as we remember today, our lives depend on no one but Christ alone. Our life now and our life forever. Our life from birth and our life after death. Or again, as the hymnwriter put it: *He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death* (v. 7).

Daily breath. He gives it and one day He will take it away. He is the Lord and Giver of life, we confess in the Creed - only He. We think we are. We try to control it. We want to

define how we live and when we die. But that is not up to us. Your Lord created you here and now, to be His blessing to those around you, and in His time He will close your eyes in the sleep of death, gather you to Himself, and give you rest. His empty tomb preaches that to us today. For it wasn't Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders, the Roman soldiers, or the sealed tomb that had control of Jesus' life and death. He did. *He had the authority to lay down his life, and He had the authority to take it up again* (John 10:18).

And because He did lay down His life for you on the cross and today take it up again in His resurrection, you have nothing to fear. That was the message of the angel to the women: ***Do not be alarmed***, though they were. And we sometimes are too, and how much joy and life that fear robs us of! Jesus has come to restore that joy and life, that no matter what this world and life throw at you, no matter how difficult things become, no matter what doubt, despair, or uncertainty descend upon you, you can look it all in the face, in its terrible face, and say: *I know that my Redeemer lives!*

And one day, you and me, we're going to be like Israel when they arrived at the *eastern* shore of the Red Sea. On the western side, they were filled with fear and dread because they saw Pharaoh and his chariots and army come to get them. But once they passed through the sea to the other side and looked back and saw the waters of the Red Sea crash down on Pharaoh and his army and utterly wipe them out, they rejoiced with the song we sang in the Introit:

***I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation*** (Exodus 15:1).

That's *our* song - of faith - now, because of Christ's triumph. But one day, when we get to the other side of eternity, we're going to look back and see how Christ has completely swallowed up all *our* enemies. And that truly, all along, we had nothing to fear.

And that you might the more confidently believe that, your Lord comes to you today, here in His Body and Blood for you to eat and drink. Not His *dead* Body and Blood, but His *living* Body and Blood, born of the virgin Mary, hung on the cross, laid in the tomb, and now risen from the dead, He puts here for you now by the power of His Word. A feast even better than Isaiah's rich feast of the best of meats and the finest of wines. Better than any feast to enjoy now for a time. For this is a feast that gives forgiveness of sin, life from the dead, and salvation from the enemy. That you may know. That you may believe. That you may be confident. That you have no fear. That your song - not just on Easter, but each and every day - may be: *I know that my Redeemer lives!*

I know . . .

For Christ is risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*]

Yes, He is risen indeed, **for you**.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.