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The Resurrection of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Alleluia!”

Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Isaiah 65:17-25

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.

Alleluia. That’s what the women wanted to say. But they didn’t know how. They didn’t have it in them. All that filled their hearts was sorrow and grief. All that filled their minds were the horrible images of that day - an abused friend, a crucified and dead Saviour. They was no joy for them. No alleluias they could utter. Only silence as they walked to the tomb. The heaviness of the spices nothing compared to the heaviness of their souls.

When they got there, it got even worse. The stone had been rolled away. Oh no. Someone came and desecrated the grave. Someone came and abused the body of Jesus. They had crucified Him! Hadn’t they abused Him enough? Couldn’t they even let His body rest in peace now? The tears they didn’t think they had left started to flow again. This was going to be even worse than they thought.

Perhaps you understand the women. Perhaps you’ve been there. Wanting to say alleluia, wanting to praise the Lord, but not being able, not knowing how. Grief filling your heart instead. Images haunting your mind. Past and present hurts, difficulties, struggles. With no end in sight. Wishing things could be different. Wondering why all this happened and where the heck is God when you need Him - really, really, need Him. That’s a tough place to be.

But God was exactly where He needed to be for these women. And for us. He needed to be on the cross. And He needed NOT to be in the tomb. He needed to be *delivered up for our trespasses*, and He needed to be *raised for our justification* (Romans 4:25). The women didn’t understand that yet, though, and so peer into the tomb with heavy and hurting hearts, expecting the worst. But they find there not a desecrated tomb and an abused body. *It’s empty*. His grave clothes there, but no body. And even as questions perplex them and fill their minds, *two men* appear, seemingly from out of nowhere, standing by them, and in *dazzling white robes*. Startled at first by the men suddenly there with them, and then *frightened* by their appearance, they look down, not sure what is going to happen next.

Well, what happened next was the Word of God. ***Why do you seek the living among the dead?*** Well, they weren't, they probably thought. They were seeking the dead among the living. ***He is not here,*** - Yes, we can see that, Captain Obvious! - ***He is not here, but has risen.*** What? ***Remember how He told you . . . ?***

And then they ***did remember his words.*** For the Holy Spirit worked through the Word spoken to them - as Jesus had promised He would - to bring to their remembrance what He had spoke (John 14:26). He said He was going to ***be delivered into the hands of sinful men,*** and He was. He said He was going to ***be crucified,*** and He was. And He said that ***on the third day*** He was going to ***rise,*** and (*count on fingers*) . . .

Alleluia! They could say it! Finally. Their sorrow shattered and banished by the preaching of these two men, who the other Evangelists tell us were really angels, sent to preach this Word to them. The angels which had preached to the shepherds the good news of Jesus' *birth* had now preached to them the good news of His *resurrection.* He was not dead - no, death was dead! And their hearts, once so full of hope and then crushed, were now filled to overflowing again! Jesus did it! Jesus won! *Alleluia!*

And that same hope - confidence, really - is now yours. Confidence not that things will work out for you exactly as you want in *this* life - because sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. This is still, after all, a world filled with sinners that sin and death that robs us of loved ones. But confidence that now in the midst of such a world, that in Christ there is a life that defeats death. And in defeating death, overwhelming all the death inducing struggles and troubles of this life as well. The troubles and sins and hurts that make you feel dead; the struggles that make you wish you were dead; the sadness and separation that death brings . . . If Jesus defeated death, then He is the remedy for these things as well. To give us confidence and hope for this life, yes; but as Paul said, *even more* - not for *this life only*, but for a life that will not end. Life in Christ and life with Christ.

And you have that life. Jesus gave it to you when you were baptized. Paul says in his letter to the Romans (chapter 6) that baptism joins you to, connects you with, Jesus' death and resurrection. That when you were baptized, the death Jesus died was your death, and His resurrection became your resurrection. When you were baptized, what He did . . . it's as if you did it. Or as we heard earlier, from Paul, ***For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.***

And so you are alive. And I'm not trying to be Captain Obvious there - you are alive in Christ. You are alive spiritually. You are now living a life that will not end, that not even death can end. For though you will one day, sooner or later, die (unless Jesus comes again first!), **death is now dead to you!** Because of Jesus' resurrection, death is now for you just the gate to fullness of life in the kingdom of heaven. The gate to ***the new heavens and the new earth*** that Isaiah spoke of. The gate to life without sin, without

death, without weeping or calamity or distress. The gate to life where there is only peace and rest.

And that confidence is not only for later, the future, but helps you even now. For the one who defeated death is also able to help you in the sin and death-caused and sin and death-causing troubles, trials, hurts, and sins you struggle with now. For when Paul said, ***If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied***, he did not mean that the hope we have in Christ isn't for this life - but that it's not only for this life. But it is for us here and now as well. Because knowing that your future is safe and secure enables you to live your life now in confidence and peace. Knowing that your sin is forgiven enables you to forgive others. Knowing that Christ is here for you enables you to be there for others. Knowing that Christ is risen and serving you enables you to rise and serve others. Knowing that Christ is free enables you to live free. And whatever struggles and troubles, hurts and fears satan hurls against you, however ominous and threatening satan wants to make himself seem and appear . . . just remember who was the last man standing on Easter. It wasn't him. *It was Jesus!*

He has risen, he is not here, the preaching of the angels said. But even before that, Jesus preached too, not only telling His disciples that He would rise, but also telling them where He would be for them from now on. That His Body and Blood would not be in the tomb, but now on altars, on tables, all around the world. Everyplace His Supper is celebrated in remembrance of Him, He would be there. Just as He was both host and meal *on the night when He was betrayed*, so He is still both host and meal for us today. Giving you the Body which died and rose again, giving you the Blood poured out for you, for the forgiveness of your sins, the strengthening of your faith, and the life that will never end. Here it is, here I am, for you, He says. Take, eat. Take, drink.

And what else can we say but *Amen! Alleluia!*

The women could finally say it. And having now no reason to remain at the tomb - no body to prepare, no vigil to keep - they returned to the city and told the eleven and all the rest what they had seen and heard. But ***they didn't believe them***.

You've been there too. What joy you have, what hope, what confidence! Jesus is here, His Word is here, His forgiveness and life are here - you tell folks what you have seen and heard and received here. *And they don't believe you*. I'm sure the women did their best, as you do, to explain, convince. But when you're living in a world of death it's not easy to believe in life. Impossible, actually. But all things are possible with God. An angel said that once, too, and a virgin conceived (Luke 1:37). And in the same way faith was conceived in your heart, by the Word. So speak, and do not give up. Speak, and be patient. Speak, and let the Spirit work through the Word. For He will. He specializes in creating life and raising the dead, after all. And at just the right time.

And Peter and the others did come to believe. They, too, would learn to say *Alleluia!*
We'll hear their story next week.

But today is our day to say *Alleluia!* And not just say it, but live it. For now,
The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the victor's triumph won;
Now be the song of praise begun. Alleluia! (LSB #464)

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

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