

1 April 2018
The Resurrection of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church

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“The March For Our Lives”

Text: Isaiah 25:6-9; Mark 16:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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.

There was a march in Washington a week or so ago. You might have heard about it. It was called the *March for our Lives*.

But long before there was a March for our Lives in Washington, there was a March for our Lives *in Jerusalem*.

In Washington, there were hundreds of thousands of people.
In Jerusalem, there was one.

In Washington, there was shouting and chanting.
In Jerusalem, there was too: *Crucify Him!*

In Washington, they marched to the White House.
In Jerusalem, to a place called the place of a skull, or Golgotha.

In Washington, it was all about violence and death.
In Jerusalem it was too.

And whether or not you think the march in Washington was worthwhile, accomplished anything, or will ultimately do any good, I'm not really here to talk about that. There are probably people here of differing opinions. Time will tell.

But the march in Jerusalem . . . that's why we're here today. Because that did accomplish something - it accomplished the greatest good of all time. For it fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah that we heard today: ***He swallowed up death forever***. Because Jesus not only marched through the streets of Jerusalem and out to Golgotha, where He was nailed to and hung up on the cross to die - after that, His march continued. For He not only marched through Jerusalem, He marched through death, He marched through the grave, and He marched through Hell itself. *Through* them, and back to life again. Rising from the dead.

And so, to use Isaiah's words again, ***the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations***, the spectre of death and the horror of hell is ***swallowed up***. Removed. Forever. For death is not the end anymore. The lock to the gates of hell has been picked. The price of our sin has been paid. For that's what the resurrection means; that's what Christ has done. Not just that Jesus has done it for Himself, but that He has done it for us! Death is now swallowed up, conquered. For ***all peoples, all nations***.

And so, Isaiah continues, ***the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces***. That's another thing those marches had in common: tears. People are tired of crying. In Washington, it was people tired of crying over children taken from us too soon. But for all of us, it is crying over the death and devastation in this world and in our lives because of sin. The tears from our loved ones and we ourselves, afflicted with disease, mired in struggles, overwhelmed by sorrows, and weeping beside the graves of those we love.

God created us with tear ducts, but to cry tears of joy, not sadness. But Isaiah makes no distinction here, what kind of tears the Lord will wipe away from all faces. He will wipe them ***all*** away in His love. The tears of sadness we cry at death, and the tears of joy we will cry when we see our Saviour. When our Saviour takes us with Him on His march through death to life again, and our bodies, too, are raised from death on the Last Day.

The tears ***Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome*** cried that Sunday morning as they marched out to Jesus' tomb were, of course, tears of sadness - if they had any tears left in them at all. But the end of their march was not as they expected. Their march failed. They did not get to do what they thought they would - anoint the dead body of Jesus. For as the angel told them: ***He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.***

They did not, at first, understand. Who could blame them! They were a whole mixed-up bundle of emotions; of ***fear and trembling and astonishment***. They were confused. They wanted to believe. Could they believe? Was Jesus alive? Really?

Well, yes He was. They would see Him. The same Jesus they had witnessed hanging on the cross and being laid in the tomb, they would see living and walking and breathing again. Paul testified that in addition to the women, Jesus also showed Himself alive to His disciples and then also to ***more than five hundred brothers!*** That's a lot of eye witnesses! They all saw that Jesus' march had been successful. He really did enter death and march through it. He really did enter the grave and march through it. He really did descend into hell and march right through it. Yes, ***Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!***

And now His march continues. He is not done . . .

The march in Washington is over. The stage came down, the people returned home. But

while Jesus, too, has returned to His heavenly home, ascending in triumph, He is still working - marching, if you will - for our lives. Marching into churches, fonts, and pulpits, and onto altars all over the world, with His life-giving forgiveness. Raising sinners born dead in their trespasses and sins to life in Holy Baptism. Raising those struck down and snared by sin in His Absolution. Raising the hearts and minds of those tired of tears with the preaching of His Gospel. And last but not least, raising us up to the Feast of His Supper. That we who die might live. That we march through death and grave with Him to a life that will never end.

This is the same Feast of which Isaiah wrote when he said:

***On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.***

For on the place of a skull, Golgotha, on that mountain is where this meal was prepared. The Lamb of God was roasted for our sins, to be our Passover Lamb. So that now eating His Body and drinking His Blood, we remember the whole march - what He did for us in the past, receiving Him now in the present, and looking forward to the future, to the Feast which will have no end.

The people of Israel had a march, too, you might remember. They marched out of Egypt, they marched on dry ground through the Red Sea, they marched for 40 years in the wilderness, and then they marched through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. It was not an easy march, but what the Lord began the Lord would finish.

And Israel sang a song about their march - and specifically when they got to continue marching and their enemies did not. We sang those words, too, today, 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 horses and riders of Egypt had been drowned. It was indeed a glorious day for the people of Israel.

And today is that day for us. For our Lord ***has triumphed gloriously***. Our sin has been drowned in the sea of baptism. And while our march may not be easy, what the Lord has begun in us, the Lord will complete (Philippians 1:6). We will enter that land the Lord has promised us, and has gone to prepare for us (John 14:2-3).

And so we, too, sing! We sing aloud our *Alleluias* again. *This is the feast of victory for our God! Jesus Christ is Risen Today* (LSB #457). And more. How can we not? For the March for our Lives is successful. And not hundreds of thousands, *but a great multitude*

that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages will be there, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes (Revelation 7:9). Those are John's words from the book of Revelation. And you know how that section ends? With the very same words that Isaiah said: *and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes* (Revelation 7:17).

So what a glorious day we celebrate today. That neither sin, death, grave, satan, or hell could stop our Lord's March for our Lives. The March that began in Bethlehem, went through the streets of Jerusalem, ran through the grave and hell, passes through our church here, and will one day reach its destination at the throne of God and the Lamb. And as the angel said: ***There you will see him, just as he told you.***

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.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.