

5 April 2026  
The Resurrection of Our Lord

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Hearts Up!”

Text: Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10; Act 10:34-43

*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.

***Set your minds on things above***, the apostle Paul said to us today. That’s easy today, right? A high feast day, a holiday, rejoicing in the resurrection of Jesus. This is the day we’ve been waiting for, and fasting for.

But what about tomorrow? And the day after that? And the day after that . . . with the trials, the struggles, the sorrows and sadness, the strife, the fears, the anxiety, the hurts, the sins . . . when *life* happens! How quickly the joy of this day can disappear in the rear view mirror . . .

But Paul doesn’t want that to happen. And even more, *Jesus* doesn’t want that to happen! For the joy of the resurrection to be just a day, or even a season, but then packed away in a box until next year. But that Jesus and His resurrection be your life and joy, your confidence and hope - *everyday*. Everyday of the year and every year of your life, until it is yours for eternity.

***Set your minds on things above***. Oh, how we’d like to! But we keep getting dragged back down, ***the things that are on earth*** filling our hearts and minds and lives. Now, the things of earth, the things of our lives, are not bad things, but good gifts of God, for us to use and enjoy. They only become bad when they push out the things above, the things of God. When they insist on ruling our lives and being our gods. When they take over, either capturing our love or causing us fear. For we are to fear and love only God.

So living in this world 24/7, ***setting your minds on things above*** is a challenge, isn’t it?

As it was for the women who went to the tomb that first day of the week. ***Set your minds on things above?*** Yeah, right! We did, and look how it turned out. We did, and they crucified Him. He took care of us, now we go to take care of Him.

And then, Matthew tells us, **there was an earthquake** - a **great** one. *Did the women feel it?* If it was great - how could they not? And it happened because **an angel of the Lord descended from heaven**. *Did the women see that? See him descending?* And he **rolled back the stone**. *Did the women see him do that?* The guards did! The big, strong, fearless, vaunted Roman soldiers - rendered small and weak, frightened and helpless. And they became what Jesus had been - **like dead men**.

What Jesus *had been* . . . for then the angel, **sitting on the stone** he had just rolled away, said to the women: **Do not be afraid!** Look! **Jesus is not here, for He has risen**, just **as He said He would**. **See the place where He had been laid** . . . but was no longer. That's why I opened up the tomb for you. So you could see it. That it is empty. That the *once full* but now *empty* tomb, *fill* your *once empty* hearts with joy.

And it did! For after seeing all this, the women **departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy**. And then as they were going, to find the disciples, **Jesus met them**. *Alive Jesus!* He said only one word to them, **Greetings!** But that was all that was needed. Sheep know the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:4). They **took hold of His feet**, for they had fallen down before Him. And yes, *His feet*. Because ghosts don't have feet. Spirits don't have feet. But risen from the dead bodies do!

So what these women could not do for themselves, was done for them. The angel, the Word of God, the empty tomb, and the risen Jesus **set their minds of things above**. It's where their minds should have been all along, but as with us, they had gotten dragged down in fear and sadness. They had seen Jesus crucified! They saw His dead, lifeless body and the sealed tomb. *That was real*. The next day, the Sabbath offered no relief, but was filled with numbness, confusion, deep sorrow. The future, which had been so filled with hope, was now uncertain. They were stuck in Good Friday. *Would they ever know joy again? Was life even worth living, in such a cruel and sinful world?* Some of you have felt that way and asked that question, I know.

But what we are unable to do for ourselves, with broken lives, stuck in the midst of this broken world that inflicts such pain on us . . . what we are unable to do for ourselves, the Word of God, the empty tomb, and the risen Jesus do for us! For Jesus is here *for us* and *with us*, just as surely as He was for the women that day. No, we cannot see Him, as they did. And no, we cannot take hold of his feet, as they did. But we do and have *even better* - **we eat and drink His risen Body and Blood**. And He **sets our minds on things above**. *Hearts up!* is the cry in the liturgy. And we respond: *we lift them up to the Lord*. Yes, we **set our minds on things above**, for the one above has come down to us.

That's why we come here every week. Not because we *have* to, but because we *need*

to. It is sometimes said that every Sunday is a little Easter. The day we come burdened with all kinds of junk from the week - the fears and worries and sins and hurts that have accumulated during the week - **so that Jesus take them**, lift them from us, lift up our minds, and fill our hearts and minds that had been so full of that junk with His forgiveness and joy and hope. Just as He did for the women that day, that first Sunday of Easter.

Which is what also happened to Cornelius and his household. We heard part of that story in the reading from Acts. God miraculously brought Peter and Cornelius together, so that Peter preach Jesus to them, **that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name**. Everyone Cornelius. No exceptions. That means Cornelius and his household, and us and our households. Gentile or Jew, little sinner or great sinner, important or unknown - *there is life and forgiveness for you in His name*. His life and forgiveness **poured** on you in His Name in **Baptism**, His life and forgiveness **pronounced** on you in His Name is the **Absolution**, and His life and forgiveness **fed** to you in His Name as food and drink in the Body and Blood of His **Supper**. That what you do not have and cannot do for yourselves, be given to you by your Lord Jesus Himself.

We come here every Sunday because we need that, after another week in a world hostile to Christ and His truth. Which is why, every Sunday, satan wants you *anywhere* else but here! To set your minds *anywhere* else. To take your eyes off the cross, off the empty tomb, off the words and promises of God, off your Baptism, off the altar . . . and set them onto yourself, your sin, your weakness, your unworthiness, and make you think it's all on you . . . and look at the mess you've made, of your life and faith. And he's laughing, while you're dying.

*But even that can serve Jesus*. Because if you're dying . . . dying to yourself, dying to what you can do and accomplish . . . well, you are right in Jesus' wheelhouse! For as we proclaim especially today, Jesus *specializes* in giving life to the dead! Risen to life Himself, He now comes to raise you up from the death of sin and fear and hopelessness, to a new life in Him. The grave is deep and dark and fearsome, but Jesus' love and light and victory even greater. Victory not only for the Last Day, but given to you even now. To lift your minds and hearts back to Him. To **set your minds on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God**, and ruling all things for the good of His Church and His Christians.

So while you may not feel the earth move, you may not see an angel, you may not see your enemies fall down as dead, or see the dead raised . . . **Jesus is still risen!** And He is still here for you, and still triumphant, and you still belong to Him, and He still forgives you, and He still has gone to prepare a place for you to live with Him forever (John 14:2-3). **Set your minds on that**, and everything else is small potatoes!

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