



Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon for Easter Sunday 2017

Jesus Lives!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach



• [The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 28, 1-10:](#)

• ^{ESV} ¹ Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.
• ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.
• ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

- ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.
- ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.
- ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.
- ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."
- ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.
- ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.
- ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give us a new heart which will hear Your Word of the Resurrection of Jesus and believe it and confess it before the world. Amen.*

• **Dear Resurrected in Christ!**

- The Lord has risen! He has risen indeed!
- It must have been a horrible experience for the two Mary's on the Day of Jesus' Crucifixion. It must have seemed to them as if everything came to a terrible end. The only thing they had of Jesus, according to their own world-view, were memories of Him and the body, still dead as they assumed. The body. They didn't even have time to finish the proper anointing with oil. They wanted to see that everything was respectful and most probably they wanted to be at the grave with their grief! So, they went early, as soon as the Sabbath was over.

- But, this would not be a usual visit at the tomb of the loved one. There was another earthquake- on the day of Jesus' death there was the first one. God is shaking up things. Everything that is not permanent will fall. The first ones which fall are the guards.
- An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone and sat on it! The guards got the shock of their lives, because his appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. Never had they seen any-one like this. They trembled and became like dead men! I think it is not difficult to imagine this.
- The stone was simply rolled away, although it was sealed off, yet not for Jesus to arise and walk out. He didn't need that any-more. He was outside already!
- To the women the angel spoke and gave them a short Easter sermon: "*Do not be afraid ...*", that is how he starts his sermon. The Gospel in a nutshell! This is what God's messenger says to all those, who do what... who seek Jesus the crucified! He was crucified. Yes, He truly died, but now He is not in the tomb any more. You are looking at the wrong place for Him. There are many searching for the dead body of Jesus in the old tombs! They cannot find Him. They will never find Him there, because He has risen! He has risen AS HE SAID! He prophesied it. It is fulfilled. The angel showed them, there was no body.
- Let us just pause for one moment and address the issues of the resurrection deniers: Do you really think the eleven fishermen, devastated as they were, especially their leader, Peter even denied Jesus three times, would pull-off a grave robbery and then hide Jesus' body so well, that it hasn't been found until today? Do you really think, the Sanhedrin wouldn't have been capable to find it within a very short time? They surely didn't leave any stone unturned. If they could come up with a dead body, which they would be able to proof as being the one of Jesus, they would have had the ultimate proof. But, the truth is. They couldn't present it! Its not in the tomb!
- All the evidence we have points to one fact: The tomb is empty. There is a very simple answer for it. He raised from the dead!
- However, the world-view of the old Adam, of the fallen Self, is so narrow-minded which does not allow for resurrected bodies. That is where the problem lies. The two Mary's had the same problem. That is why they were hovering around the tomb of Jesus on Easter-morning looking for the dead body of Jesus, essentially doing the same thing as the Sanhedrin.
- But, then the sermon of the messenger of God hit them. 'Do not be afraid, He is not here ... He has risen.' [7-8] "*Then go quickly and tell his disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him.*

See, I have told you."

- They had to go and tell the disciples that He was alive. And the messenger prophesied that they needed to go to Galilee, because in Galilee they would actually see HIM! Exactly as He had told them before His death already. Hovering around the tomb was a sign of their unbelief, that they were still captured by the closed-mindedness of their fallen state of mind. The message of the angel exploded this logical framework that made them so blind, so short-sighted, that caused them to only value something as truth which they had experienced before. Anything beyond that was just not on, couldn't be.
- This very same framework of experience which still determines so much going on in the world of today, also in our daily lives, crumbled at the message of the angel. Now, for the proof. They would meet Him in Galilee. They would see Him with their own eyes!
- And so beautifully stated, they departed quickly from the tomb both with fear and great joy and they ran to tell His disciples. There you have the joyful urgency which the message of Jesus' Resurrection creates in those who hear it.
- Now, they were running in the right direction, away from the tomb of Jesus! They left the tomb of Jesus behind them and they would never return to it! Its empty! They were running to tell the disciples and to find the living Christ! Then a surprise, on the way Jesus met them! What did He say, "Greetings"! As if it was the most normal thing on earth that He would come to them and greet them, 'Greetings'! He had told them so! Why hadn't they believed? And they fell onto the ground, grabbed His feet and worshipped Him as one is only allowed to do with God!
- Jesus basically repeated the same as the angel said, "*Do not be afraid...*" we need to hear this message often whilst we are still living in the world. You don't need to be afraid of people, things and devils or whatever they throw at you. The universe is under control. It is going down the dumps, it is perishing away, like our bodies, but, Jesus is alive and He has been resurrected from the dead. Everything about the Word of God is true. He has died for our sins. Your sins are forgiven.
- And we know that the Gospel of Matthew ends with the eleven disciples meeting Jesus in Galilee, on the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. There the disciples fell down and worshipped Him, although some doubted.
- That is when Jesus spoke the mighty words [28, 18-20]: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with*

you^(plural) always, to the end of the age."

- This is part of the Resurrection message, to go and make disciples of all nations. This is where we have our place in this wonderful story of Christ. We are part of those nations, we have been baptised and many have been taught the teachings of the Apostles.
- Where did we find Jesus, or better, where did Jesus find us, where did He come to us? Answer: in Baptism and in the teaching of His Word. Only Jesus can make disciples of Himself! He came to us through Baptism and through the preaching of His messengers. He is here with us today. And every believing and confessing disciple of Him is a true witness of His Resurrection, that He is alive!
- Paul says it in a most breathtaking way [Col 3, 1-4]: ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."***
- This refers to Baptism. In Baptism we have been raised with Christ. Now already do we have the Spirit of God. Therefore we should seek the things that are above. Your life is still hidden, but it is there with Christ in God! Now, already, through Baptism and the faith which resulted from the gift of Baptism by God you live with Him. The death of our body will be like a sleep. The sting is removed. Now, already you are in Christ and Christ is amongst us and with us. Exactly what He said.
- What does one need to see Christ? One needs faith in His Words. Through faith, which He gives to us, we come to realise Christ is amongst us when we gather around His Word and Sacraments. This is also where we find His Body. Because the Word of God is creating faith through the proclamation, through Baptism, Absolution and the Lord's Supper. Where the Word of God is administered in its different ways of the Spirit, that is where you will find the Body of Christ, the newly created Kingdom of God, the new nation Israel of God, the daughter of Zion. This would not have been possible without Jesus being alive! It is impossible that eleven locked up fishermen, scared to death, could ever have caused this by their own powers.
- So, now go and tell those others, who are struggling in blindness, the exceptional good news, that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and well, and with us until the end of the age. The Lord has risen. He has risen indeed. **Amen.**
- *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.** [Phil 4,7].*