**Mark 16:1-8 April 4, 2021 (Easter Sunday)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning is from the Gospel of Mark the 16th chapter here re-reading these words. “And he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the sun rose and the weary world woke up from its slumber, 3 women walked from the comfort of their beds and the safety of their homes to anoint the body of their crucified Savior; Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Mark mentions the time of day in which they went and that is the usual explanation for the practice of having a sunrise service. These women went as early as they could; just as the sun had risen. Remember there weren’t any flashlights for them to carry in order to see in the darkness and they couldn’t go any earlier because it was the Sabbath, the day of rest when no work could be done. That’s why they had to hurry to put Jesus in the tomb on Good Friday. That’s why no one had been back to treat his body since. These women went in such a hurry that they hadn’t even really talked over the logistics of how they were going to get to the body, because once they were already on their way they ask each other “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” They were anticipating a long morning of sadness as they eventually rolled away the stone or found some help, unwrapped Jesus body, anointed him with spices and oils, and somehow got the stone back to where it was so the body wouldn’t be stolen. But once they arrive they find something amazingly different. They don’t find Jesus body. They don’t find Jesus at all. All that remains are the strips of cloth that Jesus was buried in and a young man, undoubtedly an angel, sitting on the stone and telling them plainly. “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here.”

And why would he be? While we can study alternate accounts of the Resurrection and find Jesus appearing to the women in Matthew after they have left the tomb and appearing to Mary after the other disciples had left in the Gospel of John, Mark’s account gives us a clear message in the words of the Young Man. Jesus didn’t stay dead. Jesus didn’t stay where he was buried. And think about it for yourselves, if you rose from the dead, would you really stay in a tomb? It doesn’t make any sense that Jesus would remain in the cloths of his burial or in the place where they lay him. And in the coming weeks of this Easter season we will hear about where he is. From appearing to the disciples in the upper room to walking with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, to performing works and miracles that couldn’t possibly fit into one book. Jesus went out into the world and the message was clear. He has risen, he is not dwelling in a place of death but he is the connection for us to a place of eternal life.

Victory is proclaimed on Easter morning. That’s why this day is the high point of the Church Year. That’s why this day especially is so special when we think of our experiences last year celebrating this high holy day by ourselves. This is the day of celebration and singing. Because of Easter’s significance in the church the season of preparation for Easter is longer than the season of preparation for Christmas and why a whole week of remembrance leads up to this holy day. This is our victory day, the day when death is destroyed forever. And the victory is found at the beginning of the day. God’s power over sin, death, and the power of the devil is shown in the fact that just as the sun rises Jesus is gone from the tomb, gone from the burial wraps, and gone from the place where you would expect to find him. This victory is so complete that we can see it illustrated in that this gargantuan stone that was designed to thwart any effort of stealing Christ’s body is rolled away with ease. The efforts to stop Christ’s work of redemption were ended, there was nothing that could stand up to the power of God.

Which is why Christ isn’t there. Which is why the women are told by this Young man that they shouldn’t stay there either. “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” Leave the tomb behind and instead go forth and tell his disciples that He has risen. The Young man gives a great responsibility to these women that we too have today. To go out into this world and share that message of victory. To speak of the conqueror of death and the grave and to let the light that came from the tomb as the sun rose in the sky shine over all the ends of the earth.

But sadly we don’t go. We stay. We meander. We, as God’s Children, aren’t always the first to share our faith with others, to take this message of victory to the ends of the earth, or even to everyone in the United States, or even those in our own communities, our neighbors, our family, our friends. We find excuses. We dwell on the mistakes or bad experiences of the past. We let Satan build up walls around us to keep us here in a safe place, rather than going out where there are people who haven’t heard this amazing message of peace, comfort and hope.

It reminds us of the fact that Lent, was a time of repentance. That Lent was a time of focus on our sorrow over our sin. While we bask in the joy and celebration of Easter and this truly is a momentous day, let’s not forget the black of Good Friday. Let’s not forget the fact that while Christ is the conqueror of death, death was brought into this world, through the actions of man. That in a time when we focus so much on a virus that drastically has changed our lives and even robbed us of an Easter last year together, we brought a worse virus upon ourselves. The virus of sin. May we never forget, even on this glorious day, that we deserve the death that Christ took upon himself and suffered.

Because in that realization, when we take our place as servants to God and His children rather than His equal or superior, that’s when forgiveness comes. That’s when Christ’s victory is our victory. That’s when the forgiveness that He won on the cross becomes our forgiveness and we are made more than conquerors through His victory as he rises from the dead. Because we serve and are loved by the *crucified* Jesus Christ. Take a look again at what the Young man says to the women. “You seek Jesus of Nazareth *who was crucified*.” His suffering wasn’t forgotten. His pain wasn’t discounted or thrown away. It stays. It stays with us today. It stays in the pictures and depictions of Christ hanging from the tree in agony and pain because in that scene we see his love for us. The love that sent him to die so that we would live.

And we also see and bask especially today in the signs of His victory. In the focus of our sanctuary, the resurrected Jesus Christ, the largest and most prominent picture you will see, the place where your eyes should look as you come to this house of worship. But even in His victory the marks remain. The holes in his hands and feet. The wound in his side. The signs of his love. The signs of our forgiveness through his death. And the undeniable proof that this is the same man who was crucified. That this is Jesus who came from Nazareth, a sign of his earthly state of humiliation and his roots on this world. And that this Jesus, whom we killed by bringing sin into this world, willingly laid down his life for us.

That is what we celebrate on Easter Sunday. That Jesus Christ died and rose so that we would live eternally. And now that we are conquerors, we go out with the same joy that the young man had in proclaiming this good news to the women. We go with the same enthusiasm as the women who anticipated death and found life. We don’t need to stay in the darkness of sin or in the place of death, because death has no more dominion over us. Death has no hold over us. Death is nothing for us to fear because just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father WE TOO WILL HAVE LIFE. Life everlasting in heaven with him for all eternity. His resurrection shows us that. His victory is ours.

This year as we are blessed to come together for worship, and when it was clear that we were going to be blessed to have this service we set out here at Trinity to find something we could enjoy together if we weren’t going to be able to eat an Easter breakfast together as we had done in years past. And that’s why we made donuts and they are available at the end of the service for you to take and enjoy, to add to your own Easter meals and celebrations. Earlier we talked about the roadblocks of sharing the love of Jesus Christ with other people in our own communities and in our own lives, but today, on this day of celebration, on the High Point of the entire Church year, I want to challenge you to see a bag of donuts as more than just the delicious treat that it is. I want to challenge you to see it as a means of breaking down the barriers that anxiety, nervousness, and any other tool of the devil can use to keep us from connecting with those whom God has put in our lives and who need to know that we love them, care about them, and want to talk to them about our church and what we do here. That this is a place of comfort and peace in the gifts of Jesus Christ, in His Word and His Sacraments and that we want all people to come to this place of peace and receive from God. They don’t have to give anything. So take donuts for yourself and your family, but also take some for someone else. Give them away. And let that be a seed in their life, a small opportunity, to open a door of conversation or help in your relationship with them, to let them see the free gift of God’s love that is for them and for the world. That’s what Easter is all about, the gift that God has given the world through the work of His Son, who died and rose again to save us from our sin and give to us eternal life.

May this Easter and every day of this joyous season bring you to the realization of salvation through the work of Jesus Christ. He who was crucified, and has risen. He is not in the place of death any longer. Because He died, and went to Hell to proclaim that victory over death and Satan, we will never have to worry or fear about death again. Let us this day rejoice in His victory, come together as brothers and sisters in Christ to eat and drink the body and blood of our Risen Savior for the forgiveness of sins as he has commanded. Bask in the joy and the warmth of our identity as God’s children and look forward to the day when we will be clothed in His righteousness just as the young man was. When we will be dressed in a white robe bright shining as the sun, sitting in his righteousness as redeemed and bought back servants of the Heavenly Father. God be with you. Rejoice and sing. Come and receive. Take and Eat. And go forth to tell. He has risen. He is not here.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus’ our Lord.

Amen.