

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ be yours this Easter. Amen. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! The title for today's message is 'This is it!' and is from the First reading; Acts chapter 10. Let us pray... Amen.

This is it! Today we celebrate and remember the most important event in human history. We remember and celebrate Easter not just because of what happened in the past but also because what happened that first Easter morning is also the most important event for our future. Christ, His death on the cross, and His Resurrection together is the most important event to ever happen because there, from the empty tomb was the shout of Christ's victory over the sin, death, and the devil. Forgiveness won. Eternal life in Christ is real for all who believe and trust in Him. The tomb is empty because our Saviour lives! Not even death could hold Him! There has never been a greater phase proclaimed than that of the angel's, "He is not here, for Christ has risen, as He said." (Matthew 28:6) Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!

The magnitude of this event cannot be understated because Christ's physical resurrection from the dead is the foundation of the entire Christian faith. Without our Lord Jesus Christ physically rising from the dead the first Easter morning Christianity is meaningless, or worse. Paul told the Corinthians "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ... 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-19) All of our hope, faith, and trust in God and Jesus is absolutely dependent on Easter. Without Jesus' resurrection the prophets were wrong, Jesus was a deceiver, and Scripture is useless because God would be a liar. That would be it. You would still be dead in your sins and an enemy of God.

BUT because Easter is real, and Christ is risen, THIS IS IT!! As we confess in the Apostles' Creed, "Jesus is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity." (SC Article II) Because Christ lives we have real and objective hope. In Christ we have a God who really loves us. In Christ we really are forgiven. In Christ we are truly saved!

Christ's resurrection is the foundation of our hope and trust in God. The enormity of what happened the first Easter morning is lost on the world, it is either considered foolishness or it is a stumbling block, but for those who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-24), and the love of God revealed.

Christ's resurrection proves four incredibly important details:

(1st) Christ's resurrection proves He really is the Son of God. How? Paul tells us "Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead"(Romans 1:4).;

(2nd) Christ's resurrection proves His doctrine—His Word—is truth. Jesus wasn't just shooting His mouth off when He told the disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"(John 14:6), nor was Jesus when He proclaimed to the Pharisees how, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me."(John 8:28) For if Jesus were lying He would still be in the tomb, but because He is risen, we know Jesus and His Word are absolute truth;

(3rd) Of critical importance, Christ's resurrection proves that God the Father really did accept Christ's sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world, including me and each of you. Paul reminds us "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."(Romans 5:10-11) This is because "Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification"(Romans 4:25), but "not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."(1 John 2:2);

and (4th) and finally, Christ's resurrection proves that all believers in Christ will rise to eternal life. This is because "in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."(1 Corinthians 15:20) We can trust Jesus' words He spoke to Martha at the death of her brother Lazarus, when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."(John 11:25) Jesus tells us the same when He said, "Because I live, you also will live."(John 14:19) This is it! This is the Christian faith.

All things for our salvation flow from the cross and through the empty tomb. The heart and center of all of Scripture is this Christ. Peter tells us in today's first reading how "to Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."(Acts 10:43). Jesus is the long promised Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour of the whole world, including you. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."(Acts 10:38) As such, Jesus is the one anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. All the prophets of old point to this Christ who would come and who then would be crucified for all sinners, you and me.

And Christ came not a moment too soon.

Yet there are many who would like to forget about the real reason for celebrating Easter and instead chase a mythical rabbit to find hidden treats. But Easter is so much more than chocolate and the historical evidence for the events is overwhelming. We celebrate Easter because Christ rose victoriously over sin and death in our place. Jesus' resurrection gives a more sure hope than could Thumper's distant relative.

Now the events around the first Easter cannot be divorced from history because God's Word and secular history clearly record it. But, Scripture also clearly tells us WHY Jesus came. God in His mercy sent His Son to be born of a virgin: Jesus of Nazareth into our world. He grew to be a man and after His baptism in the Jordan at the hands of His cousin John the Baptist where God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Jesus "preached the good news of peace through all Judea and Galilee" for three years. He healed every disease and affliction, He cast out demons, He restored sight to the blind, and restored life to the dead. Jesus did all this while teaching His disciples, and all who followed Him, who He was and why He had come. And they were "witnesses of all that Jesus did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." Then, on the first Good Friday, "they put him to death by hanging him on a tree"(Acts 10:36-39).

But many people struggle with Good Friday. They like the Easter celebration, but seeing their Lord dying in their place is a hard pill to swallow. The wages of our sin is most clearly revealed on Good Friday as we stare up at the cross and see our Lord and Saviour bleeding and dying in our place for our sins. The truth is we, along with all people, were conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and have broken every one of God's commands and laws, and have done it repeatedly. By worldly standards our works and actions might look and smell pretty good, but by God's standard, apart from faith in Christ, we are poor wretched and smelly sinners in need of a Saviour; sinners who cannot save themselves. God's Word is clear, "The wages of sin is death"(Romans 6:23a). So there crucified on the cross was your substitute who took your death sentence for your sins against God and all those around you. Jesus took the wage you rightly deserve, namely to die eternally and be forever separated from God for each any every sin. Without Christ that would be your end.

Again the consequence for each of your sins is glaringly obvious on Good Friday. The price to save you was no less than the death of God in the flesh; namely the Lord of all creation, Jesus Christ. But you were not created for condemnation. You were not created to be sent to hell and eternally separated from God. That is why Christ came. That is why He died. That is why He rose. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."(1 Timothy 1:15) God loves you so much He sent His Son Jesus Christ who willingly came and gave everything, including His own life to reconcile you back to God because you are a sinner unable to save yourself. Jesus' cross was for you, those nails which pierced Jesus' hands and

feet were for you, the crown was because He is your King, the horrific punishment Jesus took was what you earned for your sins, Jesus' suffering was for you, Jesus' death was also for you because He died in your place. Yet this morning we are joyfully reminded that this was not it. Instead we see the empty tomb. This was not the end but rather the beginning as Christ's resurrection is also 'for you'. His eternal life is yours! Still you can't have Easter without Good Friday.

And so we rejoice and celebrate with tremendous excitement Christ and His resurrection. Good Friday was not the end of the story; it was the end of Satan and his dominion over creation. Easter is the end of sorrow and hopelessness because now you have a sure and certain hope in our Saviour who overcame death and the grave and rose to eternal life. Even better, Jesus didn't just accomplish your salvation some 2000 years ago and then smile at you and say "bonne chance!" and good luck. No, Christ continues to come to you and brings the forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation, and eternal life He earned for you on the cross and which is proclaimed from the empty tomb. The Holy Spirit brings you Christ's gifts this day and every day through His Word and Sacraments. This is it!

He brought them to you through your Baptism when you are washed with water and the Word, and where you died with Him to sin and were raised with Christ and given a share in His eternal life. God continues to bring Christ's gifts to you in the words of Absolution and through the Gospel spoken to you by your pastor. As Jesus breathed on His disciples the first Easter evening saying "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld"(John 20:22-23) Jesus continues to breath out His forgiveness through the called servants of His Church. And finally, God brings His gifts of forgiveness to your very lips and mouth through bread and wine when, in faith, you receive Christ's own body and blood that paid for your salvation. The same body and blood which was broken and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins was also raised for you on Easter morning. Take and eat, take and drink, this is for you!

Finally, when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, you can rejoice and sing because in Baptism you already died the only death that ever matters and have been raised to new life, your sins forgiven, and eternal life is already yours in Christ.

This is it! This is forgiveness. This is what Christ did 'for you'. Easter is life; your eternal life. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Alleluia indeed. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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Acts 10:34-43
Easter A

Trinity Lutheran Church, Churchbridge, Saskatchewan
"This Is It!"

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