

We Believe that Jesus Rose from the Dead
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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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

It is great to be here with you all this morning! It is Easter morning! And we say with a loud voice: *Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

This morning, I'd like you to participate with me in this sermon. Can you do that with me? When I say, "*Christ is Risen!*" I want you all to say in return, "*He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!*" Let's all try it together: "*Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!*"

Why are we doing this? Because today, we are celebrating with joy the most important day of our Christian faith. And our faith is like no other. For in case, in Hinduism, while spirituality matters the most, most of them do not seriously claim the historicity of their sacred stories. And in Buddhism, while Gautama Buddha lived and died, no one really knows if he really accomplished his goal of finding Nirvana. And in Islam, while Muhammad said that he was a prophet, you need to take it by faith that the verses given to Muhammad, which make up the Qur'an, were from God, given to him by the angel Gabriel, and later compiled by his successor, Abu Bakr.

Our Christian faith is like no other because we are not just celebrating that Jesus rose again in some kind of spiritual sense.

We are celebrating and saying “Alleluia” because Jesus really did rise again in the flesh! This means that our Christian faith is not some kind of mere spiritual speculation, but is about something real, because we are celebrating the real—in the flesh, bodily resurrection of life that really died and really rose again. And it is this life of Jesus Christ that ensures to us that one day we too will rise again. As St. Paul once wrote, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). But in fact, *Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!*

In our Gospel reading, we heard the confirmation that Jesus rose again just as He said He would! On Good Friday, He was beaten, crucified, and even pierced through with a spear to make sure that He was dead. His lifeless body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. And while Jesus had told His disciples again and again that He would rise again on the third day, His disciples thought that everything had been lost.

And on that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb so that they could finish anointing His body for burial. Then there was an earthquake. It was not like the earthquake that they had experienced when Jesus died. This one was different. Because this one, as Matthew’s Gospel shares, was because “an angel of the Lord had descended...and rolled back the stone” of Jesus’ tomb (Matthew 28:2). It was so terrifying that the guards who had been posted outside of the tomb “trembled and became like dead men” (Matthew 28:4b). And I believe that the stone was rolled back so that the women might look and see that the tomb was empty. For *Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Sitting on the stone, “the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid’” (Matthew 28:5a). He told them that he knew they were looking for Jesus who had been crucified. And he told them that they should go and tell Jesus’ disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead. In fact, Jesus had already gone before them to Galilee where they would see Him again. So they went, with fear and great joy, now beginning to understand that Jesus was alive.

And then, Jesus came up and greeted them. They were so overwhelmed to see Him that they fell to their knees before Him and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Note that they not only saw Jesus, but they physically held on to Him, like many others who would later come to see, hear, and touch Jesus. This is only possible because Jesus physically rose from the dead. Again as St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, “[Jesus] appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:5-6). There were those who would have loved to prove otherwise, and all they needed to do was to produce Jesus’ dead body. But they could not, for *Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!*

These women were appointed by the angel, and then by Jesus Himself, to go and share this glorious news to the others. And through our baptism, not only are we joined to Jesus’ death and resurrection, but we are also appointed to share this wonderful news of Jesus’ bodily resurrection just like these women, to share with them how Jesus won the forgiveness for all our sins on the cross; and through His bodily resurrection makes it possible for us to live forever with Him in body and soul; and

as we do so, we join with the hundreds and thousands of other Christians who have also been appointed to do the same.

As part of the priesthood of believers, each of us has been appointed to go and share this Good News. And we do not have to be afraid because God has uniquely placed each of us where He wants us to be in our many and varied vocations in order to do so—It does not matter if you are a director, manager, supervisor, employee, or someone who is retired; He has placed you where you are to share this Good News of the Resurrection with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers, so that by the power of His Spirit the hearts and minds of many might come to know of His Resurrection, for *Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!*

Today, there are many different religions in the world. But there is only one that could be disproved, and that is ours—all they need to do is find the lifeless body of Jesus Christ. But they could not! Why? Because *Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!* Our faith that we share does not necessarily make the resurrection true. What makes it true is The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, that He really did live again and was witnessed by numerous people. And that is what gives us joy and makes today the most important day of our Christian faith, because it confirms God's everlasting approval on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, His atonement of our sins, and the Good News of His Bodily Resurrection. Which means that having been baptized into His death and Resurrection, we can look forward with joy to that day, when we too will rise again and live with Him, both now and always.

For Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!