

## **“My Lord, and My God”**

**April 16, 2023**

**Our Savior’s Way Lutheran Church**

**Pastor Dave Labuhn**

Our celebration of the resurrection continues today as we remember every Sunday that our faith is based on the victory of Christ over sin and Satan on the cross and His victory over death by His resurrection from the grave. *Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.*

Last week, our focus was on the early morning at the empty tomb and the discovery by Mary Magdalene, the other women, and Peter and John, that the tomb where Jesus had been laid was empty. That tomb was not empty because someone had hastily whisked away Jesus’ body. The linen cloths had been removed from the body, and the head cloth was neatly folded and carefully placed at the head of the bier. Anyone who was bent on stealing Jesus’ body would not have taken such actions. They would have done the deed in haste and left with the body.

There were at least three witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus in the flesh. Peter and John both went inside the empty tomb and found it empty. Mary Magdalene saw Jesus in the flesh. They all told the other disciples.

During the afternoon of that same day, two disciples, probably not members of the Apostolic group, had been walking dejectedly, on what St. Mark calls a country road, but what Luke says, was the road to Emmaus, a town about seven miles

west of Jerusalem. Jesus joined them and talked to them. They described all the events that had occurred in the preceding days including the reports of that morning from the women and Peter and John. They did not recognize Jesus until late in the day, and then He suddenly vanished. They knew who He was, and they reported back to the others in Jerusalem. They verified that the reports were true. *Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Today, in our Gospel reading, we find ourselves in a locked room on the evening of the first Resurrection Sunday. The disciples are all there except Thomas. Are they in hiding? Why?

Jesus had been the target all along—although, Lazarus had also been included on the “hit list.” Jesus had even told them what was about to happen to him. He told them, not once but three times! And in each announcement of His passion, except in one instance recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said He would be raised up on the third day. They had not heard Him. Apparently, they needed more evidence than the truth that Jesus had told them and that the reports of their friends were not delusional. They seemed to be overcome by personal fears and worries and anxieties. While Jesus was the target of the religious leaders, they were His disciples. Maybe the authorities would come after them? Maybe the Romans would assume they were insurrectionists like Jesus and crucify them too! After all, there were active rebels in the city: they were called the Zealots, and they were plotting to use violence against the Romans and drive them out of Palestine. The Zealots used violence, terror, and political intimidation to achieve their goal. One of Jesus’ own disciples, an obscure man named Simon, had the surname,

the Zealot. Was he a Zealot for nationalism or the faith? The Bible does not tell us. Maybe the disciples believed they would be arrested, tried, and executed because of their association with him. After all, their leader, Jesus, was called the King of the Jews.

There was another reason they could be in jeopardy. The religious leaders knew that Jesus had said He would rise from the dead in three days. They had arranged to kill Him to get rid of Him. Fearing that His disciples might try to keep the ludicrous idea of Jesus' resurrection alive by stealing His body, St. Matthew tells us they asked Pilate for a Roman guard and seal for the tomb to prevent this from happening. Pilate told them to do it themselves. They did. The disciples were prime, potential suspects.

They were hiding behind closed and locked doors. They were also in shock. Depressed and disillusioned and downcast. Their rabbi, their master, and their friend had died a most violent and cruel death, and despite the reports of Him being alive, and His own words that He would rise from death, they doubted.

Maybe they were afraid of what Jesus might say to them for abandoning Him and not having more faith in His words.

Whatever the reason, Jesus went and found them. John emphasized that the doors (plural all of them) were locked. No one had been careless and left one open. Jesus just appeared in the midst of the disciples and did three things.

First, He said “*shalom aleichem,*” which means “Peace be with you.” He did not rebuke them or chastise them. He offered them peace. I used the same word just a few minutes ago when I said, “Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and from the Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.” You used the same words in greeting each other before the service. That peace from Jesus and from me and from you to each other was not a casual greeting. That peace was a peace from God Himself that passes all understanding. It is a peace that you and I and all mankind have needed since we went to war with God in the Garden of Eden. Jesus bought that peace for us when He died for our sins. For all those who believe in Jesus, the barrier, the gulf, between man and God was now gone because of Jesus' death of reconciliation.

The proof was shown when a curtain in the Temple—sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and four inches thick, called the *Parochet*, that took three-hundred priests to manipulate—tore mysteriously from top to bottom at the moment when Jesus died on the cross.

The purpose of the curtain was to separate the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, which held the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. Only once a year on the Day of Atonement could the High Priest enter this deep sanctum. On that day, the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat and on the floor in front of it as directed by God in Leviticus 16:11-17.

When Jesus died and it suddenly tore in half according to the Gospel of Matthew, God Himself declared peace. The sacrifice

of atonement was now fulfilled by Jesus. Peace had come. Reconciliation had come. Jesus had earned peace with God for all of us. A new covenant was formed in the blood of Jesus. A new temple emerged in the body of Jesus. A new High Priest was appointed – Jesus Himself. Jesus had foretold that the old physical Temple would be destroyed and with the entire sacrificial system. That happened in 70 A.D.

The second thing Jesus did that night was to commission His disciples. His Ascension was only forty days away. The men who were in hiding would be the ones to establish and build His church in the world. Jesus had been getting them ready for three years. Now was the time for them to be sent. He told them to tell others what He had done. He explained that they were witnesses to His teachings, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection. They were to leave their pity party in that locked room and go out among people and spread the Good News. *Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

To help them, He breathed a new life into them not unlike the life breathed into Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He breathed the breath of the Holy Spirit on them. He was fulfilling the words that we confess: “we believe the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Even more powerful and impressive, He gave them—and through them, He gave the Church—the power which He had exercised in His ministry: the power to forgive sins. We call this the Office of the Keys, and it is one of our sacraments. The Church, through your pastor, exercised that power given by Jesus here this morning in this sanctuary. Jesus really gave them the authority and

power to reconcile people to God and each other. He gave you and me as well that power to say “I forgive you,” the power of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

Eight days later, the disciples were still in that room. The doors were still locked, and Thomas was with them. Thomas had been skeptical when his brother-disciples told him what had happened on the first Easter night. We do not know why Thomas was not with the other disciples in that locked room the first night. Maybe he was getting “take out.” Maybe he was looking for Jesus. Nevertheless, in compassion, Jesus indulged Thomas and reappeared, just for him. He came and offered the “Peace of God” to Thomas and showed him the scars of His crucifixion. Jesus reconciled the gap of doubt between doubt and faith for Thomas. Recognizing this, Thomas made a confession that all of us can make when we believe in Jesus Christ. Thomas said, “My Lord, and My God.” Say that. Thomas confessed that Jesus was God, the Lord, Yahweh, and His Master. He echoed the name Moses heard from the burning bush, “I AM who I AM.” Reconciliation and peace came.

All of these episodes and events were given for us. We live over 2,000 years after all these things happened. We have the Word of God as our standard for the Truth of who Jesus was, what He did and why, and what it means for us. We have all this; yet, we too doubt. We ask, “Why can’t I see Jesus? Why can’t I see the scars? Why can’t He come and say *‘Shalom aleichem’* to me? Where is Jesus on the days of my life when I am dismal, wretch, miserable, frustrated and the world feels like it has crashed down on me?”

Jesus does come to us, and He does say peace be with you. He does so when we unlock the doors of our hearts to Him and let Him in. Jesus reconciles our uncertainties, our complaints, and our worries. He comes to us in the words of forgiveness. He says peace be with you. You are reconciled. He came to you in your baptism when you were buried with Him into death and raised again by the breath of the Holy Spirit. He comes to you in His very body and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Holy Supper. He reconciles Himself by these means of grace. He comes to you here in the fellowship of this congregation. Jesus is here present with you because: *Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Indeed, He lives. And in faith, you believe in Him because He is all we have to reconcile our sinful selves with the Father. He alone can bring us peace on the most despondent days of our life if we have faith in Him. And He has promised—He has given His word—that He will come to take us home to Him at the end of our days or at the end of time. He will bring us across the divide between this temporal world and the eternal world of His heavenly home.

Even though you may not ever have seen Him, Jesus is with us and present among us. All this because on that second Easter night, Jesus pronounced a beatitude that He said of us, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus was speaking those words about us and to us. He was telling us to keep the faith, do not doubt, and believe in me. But more importantly, He wants us to proclaim the truth about Jesus so

that others may believe, may have peace, and may be reconciled with God.

Despite all those things and times that may cause you to fear, worry, fret, and be down about in this world, remember, Jesus has conquered the world. He has reconciled us with God and made us saints of God. By His death and resurrection, we have peace with God, as found in His Word, which is meant for all people. Jesus has chosen (commissioned) each of us and given us the breath of life by the power of the Holy Spirit to share Him with all who will listen. He has commissioned each of us to reconcile ourselves with each other by sincerely saying, "Peace be with you. And also with you." He has commissioned each of us to go out and say: *Christ has risen He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

And to all who believe in Him, there is peace and eternal life in Him for He is present and among us even though we cannot see Him. Amen.