

The Surprising Victory over the Grave

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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 Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus died on Good Friday. His disciples and the women had been there...They witnessed His death and thought that all was lost. Unsure of what was next, they began to fall away. And yet, years later, here we are gathered today celebrating His resurrection! For He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia! 😊

It reminds me of a story that I heard not too long ago. It was on Sunday, June 18, 1815, and the people, of England, wanted to hear some good news. They had sent their army abroad to fight a war as part of a coalition force. Their army and the rest of the coalition were under the command of the 1st Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley. And they were off to fight against a French army that had marched across Europe. It had defeated other coalition armies for years. So, the people of England set up a series of stations, each one within sight of the other in order to receive news through visible coded messages. Believe it or not, these messages were sent from the battlefield, all the way back to England.

After the battle was over, the final message was spelled out. It said, "*Wellington...defeated...*" but the final message was interrupted by a thick fog that had set in. So, when the people heard the message, they were

heartbroken. Their commander, as well as the 7th coalition of armies sent to defeat Napoleon, must've lost. But it wasn't until the fog lifted that the full message was received. Surprisingly, it read: "*Wellington... defeated... Napoleon... at... Waterloo...*" The final report of the battle wasn't what the people thought at all. In fact, they had won! 😊

Even to our Lord's closest followers, the Lord's victory also came as a surprise. It seemed as if no one expected that Jesus would come out of the tomb. There was a huge stone covering the entrance. Guards had been posted at the entrance. And after seeing His body placed in that tomb, I'm sure to His disciples, as well as to others, they must've thought that it would've been the last that they would ever see of Jesus. So they were all surprised to hear the message of Jesus' resurrection. (As Luke 24 shares with us.)

The first people to be surprised were the women who arrived at the tomb early on Sunday morning. They had brought spices to anoint Jesus' body. They expected Him to be dead. They expected that if the guards were nice enough, they might open the tomb for them and all they would find inside would be a corpse. But instead, when they got to the tomb: the guards were gone, the stone was rolled away, and the body was gone. And "***they were perplexed about this.***" (24:4) Perplexed!?!...they didn't expect an empty tomb...It was a huge surprise! For He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

You can imagine, how surprised they were when they noticed that the two men (or angels) were standing by

them in dazzling apparel. Who asked them, ***“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He’s not here, but has risen”*** (24:5b–6a). It was surprising! (He’s not dead? He’s risen? He’s alive??!!!) It certainly wasn’t what the women expected.

And they weren’t the only ones who were surprised...because the apostles were surprised as well. Because the women, ***“returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest.”***(v.9) And how did they receive the news of Jesus’ resurrection? With joy? Not at all. They received the news with doubt and didn’t understand what the women were talking about... Of course, Jesus died! They couldn’t believe their ears. They were certainly surprised by this News! The fact that Jesus rose from the dead took everyone by surprise. So much so that they had a hard time believing it. For He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

It shouldn’t have been a surprise – at least to His followers...Jesus had told them beforehand that this would happen. The angels reminded the women: ***“Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and on the 3rd day rise.”*** (v.6b-7) The angels were surprised that the women didn’t make the connection. That’s why they asked, ***“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”*** (v 5).

There must’ve been another surprise in the spiritual realm too. Because it must’ve appeared to Satan and his demonic forces that he had won. That Jesus had

succumbed to death...It seemed as if Satan had won, and yet Jesus rose again – He rose to a surprising victory from the Grave!! For He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Maybe even the greatest and wonderous surprise of all – is that, by faith, God’s surprise victory is OUR victory as well! His death and resurrection isn’t just some story written down in history. It’s our story too! He says in John 14:19, **“‘Because I live, you also shall live!’ And because we live out our faith in Him, death no longer has ultimate power over us...Because Jesus paid the penalty of all our sins on the cross – our penalty of eternal death – all who believe in Him have that new life. He even said to Martha, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.’”** (John 11:25-26)

You see as members of the body of Christ, His church, while we might be surprised, we’re united in our belief that He is Risen! He conquered, disarmed, paralyzed sin, death, and Satan, that we might be active participants in His victory. And as members of His church, we share this surprising Message of our Lord’s Easter Victory. So that it won’t be covered by a thick layer of fog that distorts this message. Rather, all will know of His Victory, and one day -with us - celebrate the Joy of His Resurrection forever.

For He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!

In Jesus’ name, Amen. 😊