

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Resurrection of Our Lord - Year A

Week 5 of Quarantine

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Jeremiah 31:1-6

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10

04/12/2020

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

:1After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee;

there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” 8So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

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

Amen.

He’s Alive!

Good morning! Christ is risen! (*He has risen indeed!*) I start today with a question: How do you feel? I realize that not all of you are at home working from quarantine, but an unprecedented amount of the population is now stuck at home. Even if you are still leaving for work, you’re not traveling for anything else that could be considered recreational. As COVID-19 worked its way around the globe, it shut down almost everything. Disney world and other theme parks are all closed, all major sporting events have been postponed, schools have closed up, and I’ve seen drone footage of New York City and it’s almost devoid of traffic! All across the world we are re-thinking how we can limit face-to-face contact. Just look at how we’re doing worship right now!

It's had me thinking of zombies. Now, I know that might sound weird, but bare with me. I love zombies... I don't watch scary movies, but I make exceptions for any zombie based movie or show. If you remember my sermon from a few weeks ago about the apocalyptic genre, zombies are very much the chosen medium for our world's end-time obsession right now. One of the all time greatest zombie movies is the 1978 film Dawn of the Dead, directed by George A. Romero. One scene in particular is important for our current situation. The main characters all hold up in a shopping mall. It's filled with zombies who are shuffling around, following their most basic of desires. As the main characters and the zombies settle into a routine, it cuts back and forth between the two, showing a life of monotony for both the zombies and the human survivors. Sound familiar?

What's interesting is that Jesus Christ, arguably the first zombie, doesn't behave anything like what we would expect. There is no stumbling around, no senseless behavior. What we have instead is life at its fullest expression. Now, I know that Jesus isn't a zombie. As D.J. Harrington points out; *“Resurrection refers to a rising from death to life. It is not the same as resuscitation or reanimation. It assumes that the person has died and has been dead for a period of time, and when resurrected, will not die again.”* What has happened to Jesus, what the women find in the empty tomb, is unlike anything that has ever happened before.

As a side note, does anyone else find the angel's "do not be afraid" comment a little funny? The women have just seen the power of an angel make the whole world shake with an earthquake, roll the stone aside like it's a pebble, and casually sit on top of it like it's lunch break... I think fear is the appropriate response.

But the angel is just the beginning! What we need to remember is that the resurrection wasn't a belief that was held by every Jew. Think of it like Lutherans and lutefisk, while a small percentage of the world (mostly in the Minnesota region) think it's an acceptable food, the rest of us God-fearing Lutherans know that the cold weather up there has clearly messed with their heads. So not only was resurrection something that not everyone believed, they also didn't think it would happen to one person, now. Harrington writes that "*Resurrection was understood as eschatological and corporate.*" Eschatological is just a fancy word that means something that happens at the end of time.

So the women who bow down and worship Jesus have just been asked to reconsider a great deal of what they had previously understood as a given. In fact, the whole early church was forced to reconsider what both Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection meant for the world. What they could agree on was this: God had done something spectacular and world changing. Harrington writes that "*When the early Christians proclaimed that Jesus 'has been raised,' they generally used the passive voice as a way of indicating that it was the Father's*

action in Christ: God raised up Jesus.” Douglas R. A. Hare, the author of my favorite commentary, in wrestling with the question about what the story tells us about God, writes this: “... *the Easter event is properly seen as God’s comment on Good Friday. It is not just a ‘superlative miracle,’ like the raising of Lazarus, but the resurrecting of the crucified messiah. Jesus’ cry of dereliction from the cross is answered.*” God has changed everything. It’s easy for us Christians to forget how radical and world-changing the Easter story really is! We have heard it every year, and so we forget that this is more important than anything else in the world! Again, Harrington writes “*An event reserved for the end of human history has happened in the midst of human history. In the special case of Jesus God has shown [God’s] eschatological power by raising Jesus. To this event at least the kingdom of God is among us.*” And that, my friends, is why we can have such hope, because God never gives up on us. Christ is risen! (*he has risen indeed!*) Alleluia, Amen.