

Rev. Danny Mackey
The Resurrection of Our Lord
April 17, 2022
Mark 16:1-8
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!

This is our celebration today. Why we gather. We're here to sing and hear and proclaim, "Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!" Death has no dominion over Him. Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the firstfruits of them that sleep. My fellow redeemed, that's us. We're part of the victory, too! Because Christ lives, so too shall we live. Christ's resurrection from the dead is the divine guarantee that all who believe and are baptized, though they may die, will never perish. "Those who believe in Me," says Jesus, "will never die."

On the Last Day, God will resurrect us. These bodies we have now, will be restored and made perfect. They will be without sin, meaning that they will have no wrinkles or aches or scars or anything wrong with them whatsoever. Sin and death will be eradicated from every last cell; and we will be made perfect. The celebration of our Lord's Resurrection is our joy, our guarantee, our reality.

And yet, I ask this morning, does this Good News affect your life? Does it determine how you live, what you do, why you do it? Does it free you from the fear of death and protect you from the temptations of this world? Or is the Resurrection of Our Lord more like a history lesson or an intellectual exercise? Interesting, but does it move the needle? Does it shape your view of the world, or does the world shape your view of God and even this greatest of Good News?

This greatest Good News forever changed the women who went to the tomb that first Easter. We're told that upon hearing the Good News of Christ's resurrection, they ran from the tomb because *tromis* and *ecstasis* had seized them. Our translation translates those two words as "trembling" and "astonishment." Not the best translation. The Greek is far more powerful. *Tromis*: You can hear the word "trauma" in there. *Ecstasis*: Ecstasy! That feeling of being out of the body, touching the Divine. Upon hearing the Good News of Christ's resurrection, these women ran as fast as they could from the tomb because trauma and ecstasy had seized them. Both trauma and ecstasy stick with you. You can't ever get away from them. They affect you all the days of your life.

Emotions are important. They're part of the human condition. But our emotions are anything but consistent. We can have really high highs and very low lows. Depending on what's happening in our lives at any given moment, we can be on an emotional rollercoaster. That doesn't mean we disregard or dismiss our emotions. We don't wish that we didn't have them. In fact, even our Lord was emotional. He had compassion on others. He wept. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was in bitter agony over what was going to take place the next day. Even on the cross, Jesus experienced being abandoned and forsaken...by His own Father.

And this last week for us has been emotional. The eight days of Holy Week began last Sunday, as we celebrated Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Along with the people of old, we sang our hosannas to our Redeemer King's praises. On Maundy Thursday we remembered His betrayal and the Institution of His Supper. And we stripped the Altar—always a powerful and somber event. On Good Friday we gathered for our service of darkness, echoing the darkness that descended as Jesus hung on the cross, dying for the world. The Light of the World being snuffed out with a last final cry of "It is finished."

We recalled a lot of events this last week. And we also had some of our own. People still went to the hospital, celebrated birthday and wedding anniversaries, lost their jobs, and fell in love. Life is a hot mess. And the Lord of life, we recalled, died on a cross, in the midst of the messiness of this world.

So, how does that make you feel? How does that affect you? Knowing what Jesus went through on the cross for you, what does that make you feel? Does your heart ache with deep sadness? An innocent man suffered and died. The cruelest and most brutal form of execution ever devised by men. Do you rejoice in what He's accomplished for you? Perhaps it's both. Perhaps you feel both the trauma and the ecstasy.

The women who watched Jesus die felt the trauma. The rabbi they followed and supported... they saw Him nailed to that tree. They provided for Jesus' and His disciples' needs for three years. Washing the clothes, preparing the meals, even financing their journeys and the preaching tour. These women were around the whole time and were, arguably, even more faithful than the apostles. We don't hear of any of them betraying Christ or denying Him three times. They didn't flee where the apostles scattered. Admittedly, they were allowed different freedoms than the men. But it was these women

who comforted Jesus' own mother Mary as she broke down at the foot of her Son's cross. As if a sword had pierced her own soul also.

And then, just as they were about to finally get to give their rabbi a proper burial, His body is gone. The tomb empty. Nothing was making sense to them. They were alarmed. That's why the angel—who appeared to be a young man—said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.”

How traumatic! What were they supposed to think? People who died stayed dead, right? But, what about Lazarus? Jesus raised him and Lazarus was still around. A few days earlier Jesus died; and the earth shook and the graves of many opened up. Those people returned to their families. Maybe Jesus really did rise! But all they knew for certain was that Jesus' body was missing. And yet the young man said Jesus was raised! Could it possibly be true? Mary Magdalene was inconsolable, we're told. She begged who she thought was a gardener to show her where He had taken Jesus' body. That gardener just so happened to be Jesus. So, most certainly, they were feeling a mix of emotions. The lows and the highs, both at the same time. Both trauma and ecstasy.

When our emotions seize us, things that aren't as we think they should be can really mess with our minds. Nothing makes sense. We become afraid. We get upset. Our emotions can rule us.

And the thing that messes us up the most is death. Death—our death or the death of a dearly loved one—takes a firm grip on our thinking and wages war with our heads. I can't help but think of my good friends and fellow brothers in the Ministry who died this last year: both Brian Homann and Leonard Poppe. Brian's life and ministry cut off so early. Leonard's ministry was longer, but he had at least another ten years in him. I mention them because of something Leonard would do. Something that really annoyed his wife, Karin. Throughout the entire Church Year, excepting Lent, Leonard would do the Easter Acclamation: “Christ is risen!” [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!] While it annoyed his wife, Leonard was making a point. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead and lives and reigns to eternity changes everything. If the Resurrection of Our Lord is forefront in our hearts and minds—in our lives—then it will affect everything.

We mourn, and our Lord's Resurrection wipes every tear from our eyes.

We get upset and frightened, and our Lord's Resurrection comforts our anxious hearts and minds.

We feel anger and hatred, and our Lord's Resurrection proclaims that God has everything under control and that He holds us in His loving embrace.

We are traumatized by our sin and the sins of others, and our Lord's Resurrection proclaims that the sin has no hold on Him, making us ecstatic!

That's not the end of the story. Because death has no dominion over the Lord of Life, it also has no dominion over those baptized into His Resurrection. His resurrection victory is our resurrection victory! Now, though we die, we will live in Christ in heaven, gathered with all the saints—including Brian and Leonard and all those who've gone before us in the faith. And they are gathered with us this morning because Christ brings them with Him every time we gather in His name and partake of His body and blood. Together we feast, a feast of the very best that God Himself has to offer. Every tear is wiped away. Every reproach taken away. Pure, heavenly bliss. How can this not create ecstasy in us!

The Lord of Life strode victoriously from the tomb, full of life, and wanting nothing more than to give us that same life. Thus we're here to sing and hear and proclaim, "Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!" And because He is risen [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!], we too shall rise and live forever. This is indeed the greatest Good News!

Now, one last point before we get to the Creed. Whether or not you feel traumatized or ecstatic doesn't change reality. Christ's Passion and victory, and your justification before the Father, remain. Whether or not you even believe these Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection doesn't change the reality. Just because you may not feel "saved," doesn't mean that it isn't true. Just because you doubt or even flat-out reject the truth doesn't make it less true. "It is finished," regardless of how you think, feel, or believe. But... it is finished, in Christ and because of Christ. He died for you. He rose again for you. This is the greatest Good News.

May this greatest Good News have reign and rule in all that you say, think, and do. May it affect you deeply and shape all that you are and how you are. May it comfort you in your trauma. And may it make you ecstatic—ecstatic because our Lord has defeated death and offers you His Life and Resurrection!

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