

## HE IS RISEN!

Easter Sunday  
April 12, 2009  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
Hecla, SD

Hymn 199:1-2

**Text: Luke 24:1-8 *Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" And they remembered His words.***

Theme: EASTER'S QUESTION:

"Why Do You Seek the Living among the Dead?"

In the name of Him "*who lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore,*" (Rev 1:18), Jesus Christ our risen Savior, dear fellow redeemed,

I was pretty nervous this morning. Something highly unusual happened. Something I'm not used to and, I'm a bit embarrassed to say it, scared me! Usually when I get up in the morning there is some light outside from the sun. But not this morning! I got up and the sky was dark! I became even more concerned after I had gotten dressed and ate breakfast that there was STILL no sun to be seen! I wondered if the sun was ever going to rise! Thankfully, 10 minutes before church started, I was VERY relieved to see the sun's bright and warming rays lighting the sky!

Hopefully you realize I'm not being serious here. I knew the sun was going to rise this Sunday morning. In fact I even went to the website for the Weather Channel and found out that the sun would rise at 6:51 this morning. The point is that there are certain things in life that we never need to worry about and quite frankly are ridiculous to worry about. The sun coming up in the morning and setting at night is one of those things. This is something so reliable that we don't even think about it. In fact the sun rising and setting are so reliable that you can go online and find out what time the sun will rise on the day of your 95<sup>th</sup> birthday.

So if we don't worry about the sun rising, what are some things that worry us? We worry about what kind of world our children and grandchildren will live in. We worry about what kind of planting and harvest season we will have. We worry whether there will be enough in our 401k plans for us to be able to live off of when we retire. We worry about what the blood work will reveal. And the list goes on and on. Because the future seems so unpredictable, we worry about it. But because the sun is so reliable, we never worry about it.

What about the promises of Jesus? Are they to us like an unpredictable future or like a reliable sun rise? For our Mid-week Lenten series this year, we considered various questions that

were asked by Jesus and by His enemies during His Passion. On this glorious Easter Day we want to consider an Easter Question. Let us consider this question the angels asked the women at the empty tomb that first Easter morning - "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" May God the Holy Spirit teach us to believe and trust promises of our risen Lord! Amen.

It is hard to imagine what Good Friday and Saturday were like for the followers of Jesus. Some of them had watched from a distance as the Teacher and Friend whom they loved nailed to a cross. Some of them heard His cries of anguish from the cross as His soul suffered the torments of hell. Some of them saw Him breathe His last. Some of them may have even watched as the soldier pierced His side and saw the blood and water flow out, showing that He was in fact dead. We know that in the late hours of Good Friday, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus, watched as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the dead body of Jesus down from the cross, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in Joseph's new tomb. These women took note of where the tomb was so when they returned after the Sabbath, they could anoint the body with spices and fragrant oils as was their custom with the dead.

In the early hours of that Sunday morning, what do you think the women and disciples were worried about? Were they worried about whether or not the sun would come up that morning? I doubt that even entered their mind. And it seems that it occurred to none of them that Jesus might have risen from the dead. Instead, Mark records in his Gospel account, what the women were worried about. ***"Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"*** they asked each other. (Mk 16:3) Their only concern was how they were going to get into the tomb to anoint the corpse with spices and fragrant oils.

But as they reach the tomb they find out that there was no need to worry about that large stone. The early morning light revealed the stone had already been rolled away. And when they reach the tomb we read that they were perplexed to see that the body of Jesus is no longer there! As they tried to figure out what was going on, two angels appeared and asked them our question for this morning. ***"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"*** In other words, what are you women doing here looking for Jesus? This is a graveyard where dead bodies reside! This a tomb where dead bodies belong! Living people don't be long in tombs - and Jesus lives! ***"He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"*** Jesus didn't belong in a tomb or a graveyard because He was no longer dead. It was the third day and Jesus rose from the dead - exactly as He said He would.

The women were not looking for a risen Jesus. In fact, we don't find any of Jesus' followers rushing to the tomb on the third day to see if Jesus really was going to rise as He said He would. The only reason these women came to the tomb was because they had seen the dead body of Jesus laid in this tomb, and they returned to honor their Lord by anointing His corpse with spices and fragrant oils. The women knew what to expect with death. They expected to find the body of Jesus where Joseph and Nicodemus had left it on Good Friday.

***"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"*** It is almost as though the angels can't believe that the women were actually expecting to find the body of Jesus in the tomb! ***"What are you doing here? Don't you remember what Jesus told you? Don't you remember how He said He would rise from the dead on the third day? He rose from the dead, just as He said He would!"*** The women were perplexed that the body of Jesus no longer lay in the tomb. But the

angels were perplexed that the women actually expected to find Jesus' dead body here. The angels had absolutely no doubt that Jesus would rise from the dead. As far as the angels were concerned, the moment Jesus said it, it was as good as done. It meant that things could happen no other way. Just as God said, "Let there be light," and there HAD then to be light, Jesus said He was going to rise, so that meant He had to rise. The angels knew the S-O-N would rise, just as we know the s-u-n will rise.

Consider also the enemies of Jesus. Remember why they asked Pilate to secure the tomb of Jesus? ***"Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."*** (Mt 27:63-64) Even the ones who crucified Jesus remembered that He said He would rise from the dead.

So the angels knew Jesus would rise from the dead, because He said He would. The enemies knew Jesus said He would rise from the dead and told Pilate about it. It would seem, then, that the only ones who forgot Jesus words about His resurrection were the followers and friends of Jesus. ***"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"***

Hymn 199:3-4

How could they forget something so important? How many times did Jesus need to tell them that He would die on the cross and rise again the third day? We often amazed at their lack of faith and forgetfulness. I believe that one of the reasons that the disciples and women forgot the promise of Jesus to rise because of what they saw with their own eyes on Good Friday. What they saw with their eyes hanging on the cross overpowered what they heard with their ears.

If we scoff at the lack of faith of the disciples and women, then we fail to recognize a truth about ourselves - we are just like them! Actually, if you are like me, it is actually worse than seeking the living among the dead! They saw the death of Jesus and thought that was the end. We hear that the stock market is down and we worry about the financial difficulties that the future might have in store for us. We see wet fields and worry that we won't get our crops in. We lose some calves and fear for our pocket books. We see our friends and neighbors getting laid-off and worry that our job might be next and we'll have to give up our nice car and get a smaller house.

How dare I scoff at the women and the disciples when I worry about such small and insignificant things! They were struggling with the sight of death - I struggle with my bank account and my health care provider. They forgot Jesus' amazing promise to rise from the dead! I forgot that my heavenly Father has promised that He will always provide for the needs of His children. I forget the simple lesson of the history of Christian faith which King David taught us, ***"I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread."*** (Ps 37:25)

***"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"*** Jesus promised to them the seemingly impossible - that He would rise from the dead. But He did exactly as He said He would. He did exactly as the angels knew He would. He did just as His enemies feared He would. If Jesus kept this seemingly impossible promise to rise from the dead, what promise is there that He will not keep?! His promise that we will have food and clothing? Easter answers that question. If Jesus kept His promise and overcame death, He can overcome a bad economy and bad weather to

provide for us and our families.

What about His promise of forgiveness? This too is something Jesus has promised us, but which we so often doubt. When the sin which we have confessed to God and been assured of our forgiveness, but still feel guilty - then we doubt our forgiveness. We aren't really sure that God has removed our sin from us. We aren't really sure that God remembers our sin no more. The empty tomb answers this question as well! God testifies through the Apostle Paul that Jesus ***was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*** (Rom 4:25) When God raised Jesus from the dead it was a public proclamation that all your sin was paid for by Jesus on the cross. His resurrection is God's declaration that you are not guilty in His sight. You are justified - declared not guilty by almighty God!

What about when we or a fellow believer in Christ faces death? Again the question of the angels answers the question of death. Not even death can stop Jesus and His promises. If Jesus can keep His promise to accomplish the impossible and rise from the dead, nothing can keep Him from keeping the rest of His promises. ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*** (Jn 11:25-26) Those who die in the Lord do not perish, but have everlasting life. Those who die in the Lord live to Him eternally.

***"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"*** May we carry the message of the resurrection with us every day. Not even death could stop Jesus from keeping His promise to overcome death. If He kept His promise to rise from the dead, what is there we have to be worried about? Because the S-O-N rose, we should view all His promises as being just as reliable as a s-u-n rise! Praise be to Him who once was dead but now lives eternally to save. Jesus lives! Amen!