

# EASTER SUNDAY

## Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

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### Everything You Need to Know About Easter

#### Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup>and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

<sup>4</sup>But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

<sup>6</sup>"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

<sup>8</sup>Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

It's Christmas, not Easter, when we are more inclined to think in terms of the past, the present and the future. Maybe we have Charles Dickens to thank for that. But even without his ghosts, strong family traditions make us nostalgic for the Christmases of our pasts. Why we'd move heaven and earth, if we could, to get home or have everyone home for Christmas.

Easter isn't like that. Memories of fluke Spring snowstorms that altered Easter egg hunts in the backyard don't have the same emotional pull. Our cross-country travel is reserved for Spring Break. And if it just so happens that Holy Week falls during Spring Break, then a lot of us are singing our Alleluia's in Florida today and the rest of us would if we could. My point is very few of us wax nostalgic about Easter's past, nor set our plans for Easter's years to come. But that's not to say we don't think about Easter. We do. Past, present and future. We just think about it on a deeper, more spiritual level.

For instance, in thinking about Easter past, we tend to go further than our childhoods. We try to go back to that very morning. Who of us hasn't pictured the Garden Tomb in our mind's eye, "very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise" (Mark 16:2)? But we also wonder about it too, ask ourselves, "Is it really true? Did Jesus literally rise from the dead? How can we be sure? Does anybody know for certain?"

Thoughts about Easter's future are similar. "What's going to happen to me when I die? I sure hope we're going to rise from the dead too. When is that going to be? Is it going to be? Or is it just a nice story told us at funerals to make us not so sad?"

And then there's what we're thinking this Easter present. Like, "It wasn't this cold on Christmas!" But more seriously, we listen with rapt attention to the Holy Scriptures hoping for a piece of indisputable evidence, some sort of confirmation to what you'd like to believe the answers to all those questions you have about Easter's past and future actually are. You'd even settle for some insight into how what happened so long ago or what's going to happen in a distant future makes a real, discernable difference in the here and now. But what you've got so far – apart from some catchy tunes – is an Old Testament reading about a mountain feast, and a Second Lesson that started with a line that actually feeds our sneaking suspicions and worst fears: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people to be most pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

But maybe worst of all is how we began our Easter morning at the garden tomb according to Mark's Gospel. The one that leaves out all the details we crave in order to answer our questions and quell our doubts. The one that seems devoid of the indisputable evidence we came here hoping for. Mark's account of the first Easter morning doesn't even include an appearance of the resurrected Christ! Sort of odd, don't you think, for a Gospel with the stated purpose of proving Jesus is the Son of God to leave out such an important detail?

My purpose this morning is to make sure we don't overlook what we are being told in Mark's eight short verses. It's everything we need to know. Not everything we want to know ... not things that would be nice to know...but absolutely everything we need to know about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For instance, the account tells us of three faithful women coming to the tomb early Easter morning to find the stone rolled away. “As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side” (Mk 16:5). Matthew says he was an angel (28:5), Luke adds there were two of them (24:4). Mark’s focus is on their message that tells us the three things we need to know about Easter. The first thing is found in what the angel says about the past: “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here” (16:6). That’s everything you need to know about the past: Christ was crucified. Christ died. Christ’s body was buried. Christ rose from the dead. Not as a ghost. Not in some spiritual sense. Not as a metaphor. Not as a memory carried in a believer’s heart. Not as mere inspiration. But absolutely, positively, literally for real! As real as you and I are really here today. Jesus came back to life in the body. “He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him,” (16:6) the angel said.

The second thing we need to know about Easter is found in what he said about the present. “[Jesus] is going ahead of you into Galilee” (16:7). This is everything the women needed to know about the present. Jesus’ resurrection wasn’t merely something to know about. It’s not mere information lacking further implications. Jesus, the young man said, is doing something now. He is going ahead of you. Not just pointing the way. Not just serving as an example. Jesus is on the move to Galilee. For the women this meant home, not heaven. Galilee is where they’re from. What they now knew about the past: that Jesus had been crucified, died and was buried but on the third day rose from the dead, was changing what they knew about the present and how things worked in it. They knew their lives in Galilee would never be the same now. Just like ours can’t be either with the risen Christ on the loose and on the move in the present.

How exactly? The angel was clear about that too. “Don’t be alarmed” (16:6). It’s a message the risen Christ would repeat to his disciples when he appeared to them that evening. “Don’t be afraid” (Mt 28:10). No matter what is going on in the world ... no matter what is happening in your life ... It’s not time to curl up in a ball. It’s no time to be timid and afraid. Jesus is alive! It’s time to “go [and] tell” (16:7).

The third thing the young man tells the women is about the future. “There you will see him, just as he told you” (16:7). This is everything you need to know about what’s coming: you will see him, just as he told you. You will see him, like Job said, “In my flesh ... with my own eyes” (Job 19:26,27). What we really need to know about the future he has already told us in his Word: that on the Last Day our bodies will also be resurrected from the dead and all who trusted in Easter past while present in this life will love with him forever, body and soul, in a glorious paradise. Period.

Surely Mark know more about what happened at the tomb that first Easter morning than he is telling us. With Peter as his primary source there were any number of details he could have included. But under divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit he didn’t tell us everything he knew, so that on this Easter Sunday morning 2018, you and I could hear exactly what God knows we need. We might love to have the all the details; the biology, physics and chemistry of the resurrection. Indisputable archeological evidence and a cool app would be nice too, thank you very much! I suppose, if offered, we’d even take a peek at the dates determined for our own entrance into heaven and the Last Day when the dead are raised to immortality.

But in an age when we are crippled by details and left dizzy by an unending chorus of voices telling us a million things that really don’t matter, a billion things that might be real or fake, a trillion things that are ostensibly meant to inform but in the end raise even more questions, God’s given us his straight-forward message about the past - Christ has died, Christ his risen; about the future – we shall see him just as he told us; and about the present – we are following him on the way from the place of his resurrection to the gates of glory.

What more could we possibly need!?!

Amen.

### **Prayer of the Day**

**M:** Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you conquered death and opened the gate to eternal life. Grant that we, who have been raised with him through baptism, may walk in newness of life and ever rejoice in the hope of sharing his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** **Amen.**

### **Prayers of the Church**

**M:** Heavenly Father we thank you for an Easter message about our past, present and futures.

On this day we rejoice in the good news that Jesus is risen, he is not in the grave, the place where his body was laid is empty.

We also are thrilled to know he is on the move in our lives. Present in every circumstance and giving his purpose and power to our days. Make us not afraid to follow after him.

Strengthen our faith and heighten our anticipation of seeing Jesus with our own eyes on the day you resurrect our bodies from their graves and take us to be with you forever in glory.

*Special requests*

Gracious Father, you have restored to us this day the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts we pray ... *to Lord's Prayer*