

The Resurrection of Our Lord  
St. Matthew 28:1-10; Colossians 3:1-4

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Having gone through another Holy Week, you have witnessed again the Lord's Passion. He rode into Jerusalem as a king, to His coronation of thorns and to take His place on the throne that is His cross, upon which He died. He rode in knowing full well what would happen to Him.

He knew He would be captured. He often gave glimpses of His hidden majesty when He avoided capture walking right through the midst of His enemies, but this time, He went into Jerusalem for the very purpose of being captured. He knew He would be beaten and flogged and spit upon. Again, there were many times when the Jews wanted to cast stones at Him or throw Him over a cliff, and He, quite divinely, passed right through the midst of them without a scratch, but this time, He went into Jerusalem for the very purpose of being abused and killed.

And His death was quite the injustice, at least from a worldly perspective. His only crime was to teach the people how God really was over and against the law-oriented religion of the Pharisees. He sought no earthly power—in fact, He turned down as much when Satan offered it to Him. (cf. Matthew 4:8-10) He sought no insurrection against the Roman occupying force—in fact, He commended paying taxes to Rome (something that is probably difficult to hear at this time of year)! (Matthew 22:17-21) Yet all kinds of false accusations were leveled against Him, even in the face of contrary and true evidence. He was innocent, and on top of that, He was sinless.

Still, His death was quite the blow that Justice demanded—Divine Justice. Inasmuch as He knew what He was riding into Jerusalem to accomplish, He also knew why. For the supper He would celebrate, the false accusations He would endure, the beatings He would suffer, and that inglorious death He would die were all *for you*. As St. Paul declared, and I have repeated over these past few weeks, “[God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) So what one could say, then, is that the worst sinner died on the cross, receiving the blow that Justice demanded, as commanded through the prophet Ezekiel: “The soul who sins shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4d) And this, as learned from the rest of Scripture, is eternal Death (with a capital d)—an eternal separation from God and His blissful glory.

So, as you look back at this past week, recalling what your ears have witnessed, you should see His Passion for you in everything that Jesus endured. More than that, you should see in His suffering and death the full wrath of God, every single last bit of it, leveled against one Man for the sin of the world. When Jesus hears those false accusations leveled against Him without saying a word back, He is receiving the condemnation due you, for those accusations are true of you. When Jesus receives the blows from the temple guards, as representing the heavenly kingdom, and from the Roman soldiers, as representing the earthly kingdom, those are the blows rightly due you for your sins against God and your crimes against the state (no matter how big or small). When Jesus was nailed to the cross and there was forsaken by God and died, He died forsaken for you, died the death you rightly deserve for having forsaken God and ignoring His Law and statutes, as it is written, “The soul who sins shall die.”

Where does that leave you? In a word: forgiven. If Jesus took the sin of the world away, then the world is left with no sin, and that includes you. It is removed from you as far as the east is from the west. In another word: alive—sort of. If Jesus died your Death for sin—for which He was sealed in a grave—and since you have no sin left for which to Die, then Death no longer has dominion over you. Oh, you will still experience death—a bodily death in this Vale of Tears—so long as Christ does not return first, but I'll get to that in a moment.

And, to seal that to you, He is raised from the grave. The work of your salvation was completed in the death of God on the cross, and your eternal life in Christ was sealed to you in His resurrection

from the dead. Death and resurrection—you can't have one without the other, and without the other, the one is meaningless and pointless—that's why here was celebrated the whole of it in one event the past three days, as the Body of Christ, His Church, has done for many generations. That's why to this point, I have reiterated the Lord's Passion and death on this day, the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

And so, it is as was heard, the angel rolled the stone away from the mouth of Jesus' tomb, revealing an empty grave. And, he sat on it—no one was going to roll the stone back over the tomb and cover up what is the greatest blow to Pharisaism and Roman rule—indeed the greatest blow to the ways of all men. Death, the greatest enemy of man, for which no man is a match, is itself no match for God, who in the person of His Son defeated Death by His own death and resurrection. He makes of death a captive enemy.

For, as I said, until the Christ returns in glory, all men will die. But, for those who have true faith in God, who trust solely in the Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sins and their own bodily resurrection, death is nothing to be feared. Quite the contrary, you can meet death willingly, whenever God pleases, knowing full well that on the day the Christ returns to judge the earth, you will be raised to everlasting life. You can say with St. Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21), as taken up by a poet anonymously:

For me to live is Jesus  
To die is gain for me;  
Then when so e'er He pleases,  
I meet death willingly.

Or even as was sung just two nights ago:

My Savior, be Thou near me / When death is at my door; / Then let Thy  
presence cheer me, / Forsake me nevermore! / When soul and body  
languish, / Oh, leave me not alone, / But take away mine anguish / By  
virtue of Thine own!

Be Thou my consolation, / My shield when I must die; / Remind me of  
Thy passion / When my last hour draws nigh. / Mine eyes shall then  
behold Thee, / Upon Thy cross shall dwell, / My heart by faith enfold  
Thee. / Who dieth thus dies well!

Now, God uses that captive enemy to bring you from this mortal body and into His glorious presence, transformed in a twinkling of an eye; a flawless body to go with a flawless—that is sinless—person.

Jesus said, as you will recall from two weeks ago,  
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. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

By a God-given faith, you do believe this, for that God-given faith, as mentioned, trusts solely in the Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and resurrection from the dead. He who dies in the faith dies well!

However, there are some who refuse to believe this, some who reject God's grace. These still try to cling to their sins, refusing to believe that Jesus died for them, either because they believe that they can atone for them themselves (that "I'm a good person" statement is indicative of one such as these) or because they deny that Jesus' death was for the forgiveness of sins (believing Jesus was simply a good teacher is indicative of one such as these). Either way, they cling to sin, for which they cannot atone, which kills them. Oh, to be sure, Jesus' resurrection also means that they will be raised from the dead, should they die before His return, but they will be raised to eternal Death—that eternal separation from God and His blissful glory, because they want nothing to do with God and His grace. Oh, they may claim to believe in Jesus, but the Jesus they believe in is a false god erected in their own image—one that does their bidding.

But not you, dear hearers. For you are here on this Resurrection morning by the grace of God, to receive the strengthening of your faith by Word and Sacrament. To you, as to Mary, the Word of the Lord as from the angel is this: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified...He is risen, as He said...he has risen...you will see him." Then, as you heard from very lips of the risen Christ, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My **brothers**...they will see me." That message is also for you, for you too, by faith will see Him. You, too, can rejoice, for the Lord is pleased to call you brothers—despite the sins and crimes you have committed, despite the wrongs you have done—because He has taken these things from you and destroyed them, and because you have received faith and by the waters of Holy Baptism, you have been made a son of God, and if a son, a brother of Christ and co-heir with Him of eternal life.

So, yes, you will see Him. Today, you see Him with your eyes of faith as the Word of God is proclaimed into your ears by His called minister, forgiving your sins as certainly as Christ Himself were standing here in His own resurrected and glorified body and speaking these things to you. Today, you will see Him with your eyes of faith as He comes to you in His body and blood, though hidden in, with, and under bread and wine; for in that most sacred meal, you feed upon the resurrected body and blood of Christ, and you receive His life.

Yes, you will see Him, because one day He will return and raise all the dead to judgment. Those who have believed on His name—that's you, dear Baptized—will be raised to eternal life. There, will be fulfilled in you the words of Job, who said, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job 19:25-27) "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

You will see Him, because He is no longer dead; He is risen as He said. So, "**Hallelujah! Christ is risen!**" [leave time for congregation to respond] "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus says, "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?" By God-given faith, your answer is, "Yes"; and so, you, too, will live eternally and see Him, though you may die, because you will die well, in the faith, because you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.