

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

Easter Sunday

April 17, 2022

Psalm 118:1, 15–29 (ESV):

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

15 Glad songs of salvation

are in the tents of the righteous:

“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
16 the right hand of the LORD exalts,
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”

17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

18 The LORD has disciplined me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

23 This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day that the LORD has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save us, we pray, O LORD!

O LORD, we pray, give us success!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

27 The LORD is God,

and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,

up to the horns of the altar!

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

you are my God; I will extol you.

29 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

for his steadfast love endures forever!

1st Scripture Reading: Isaiah 65:17–25 (ESV):

New Heavens and a New Earth

17 “For behold, I create new heavens

and a new earth,

and the former things shall not be remembered

or come into mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever

in that which I create;

for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,

and her people to be a gladness.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem

and be glad in my people;

no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping

and the cry of distress.

20 No more shall there be in it

an infant who lives but a few days,

or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,
and their descendants with them.

24 Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
and dust shall be the serpent's food.

They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain,"

says the LORD.

EPISTLE: P1 Corinthians 15:19–26 (ESV):

19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Gospel: Luke 24:1–12 (ESV):

The Resurrection

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. **2** And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. **5** And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? **6** He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, **7** that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” **8** And they remembered his words, **9** and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, **11** but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. **12** But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Sermon 16 – Sunday of the Resurrection

“Lives Eternally”

Luke 24:1-12

Dear friends,

Our Gospel lesson for this Sunday of the Resurrection talks about the resurrection, and it does it in typical Luke fashion: Just the facts. Luke is not quite Joe Friday but sometimes his Gospel reads like it, he doesn't do a lot of commentary like John and sometimes Matthew do. But in the facts we find the truth, and in the truth we find our hope, our glory, and the whole reason for our faith. Facts don't have to be dry. Facts don't have to be lifeless. The resurrection shows us this in spades. There's no complexity to explain here, there's no big angles I want to take with this. This is my last Easter among

you, and so let's just celebrate the Lord's Resurrection together and talk simply about what it means.

Jesus has just been crucified and buried, and that is frankly all we need to say about what happens before this. Like before, Luke is recording facts, and those facts are based on eyewitness account. Best we can tell, Luke builds his Gospel by interviewing people who were there. He was a physician so he was used to doing this, it reflects his education. So we think Luke interviewed Joseph of Arimathea about the burial, he interviewed Mary and Peter and James and John and everybody else. Whatever form his research took, he did it, and this is what it tells him. Keep in mind he did this pretty close to the event, to the occasion. We don't know where Luke was during the crucifixion or anything like that, but it didn't take him long to put together his Gospel, so we can trust that memories were fresh, we can trust that he got the eyewitness facts best he could.

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” Early bird gets the corpse, as they say, so the women go out to do their diligence and attend to the body of their Lord and Savior with the spices. These spices were for preservation. This wasn't quite Egyptian embalming, they weren't planning on turning Jesus into a full-blown mummy, but showing respect to the dead involved bathing the body and wrapping the body in linens soaked in these preservatives to stave off decay for some time. Again, they are here for a dead person. The women who have faithfully followed Jesus, heard his words, along with his mother, and they think he is dead. They think he is dead because they saw him killed, unlike most of the disciples who hid out of fear. They saw a Roman soldier, a person who deals death for a living, pronounce their Lord dead. There's no doubt in their minds. These spices weren't exactly cheap and they had to mix them properly, so there's prep work that has gone into this. They think he is dead.

It's hard to know what they were thinking when they couldn't find the body, Luke just says that they were perplexed, but help comes quickly. **“4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. 5 And as they were**

frightened and bowed their faces to the ground,” Angels only show up for the big things, and these were angels. Their clothes are described as dazzling, white light is a frequent feature of God's appearances and the angels, when they assume human form, are often talked about this way. Again, you don't get an angel to show up unless it's important. Angels announced Jesus' birth, and now they're about to announce His resurrection. The reaction is typical, they're afraid, because angels are holy and they are not. It is the words of the angels where you get some of our first teaching to work with.

“The men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” Beautiful. Living and dead have always been separated. We separate the dead from us to keep us safe. Dead bodies pose massive hygienic risks, they are not pleasant to look at, and all sorts of other things mean that keeping the dead around is not something we typically do. You don't look for the living among the dead, but that's exactly what these ladies were doing without even realizing it. God is God of the living, God is God of life. He created us. He sustains our life by giving us food, shelter, safety, that kind of thing. God is here for life, not death, and so to find servants of God among the dead is unusual. Jesus' entire mission was to go to death, to suffer and to die and to do all those things that God had no business doing. Jesus came to seek the living among the dead. Paul tells us that as sinners we are spiritually dead, that like a corpse, we cannot revive ourselves or make ourselves alive or anything like that. Jesus comes to us, dead in sins and trespasses as we are, and makes us alive again. He does this by dying Himself, and making Himself alive again. When we are made His children Jesus ties our destiny together with His, making it so that what happens to Him, happens to us. He dies, we die. He rises from the dead, we rise from the dead. So this whole thing about why are you looking for the living among the dead pretty ironic, because that's what Jesus did with us. He found us dead in our sins and made us alive again.

The angels' statement is quite simple, remember how Jesus told you He would do this. Jesus had been predicting this from the beginning, but the concept of the Messiah

dying was just a bit much to swallow. Still, it is to Jesus' words that the angels direct the women. That has always been the angels task when they appear, and that helpfully directs us in our day and age now. I would very much like an angel to appear to me, but even if one were to appear to me, that angel would probably just tell me to read and listen to the Bible instead. That's exactly what these ones do. Remember what He said. The Bible is all the things Jesus has said to human beings throughout history. Remember what He told you.

Resurrection is proof for Christians. Jesus said all these wonderful things that the Bible records, but all that demands an answer to one question: So what? Why should I believe Him? Why should I trust Him? Why should I take all these fanciful, sometimes strange ideas at face value? The resurrection, Easter, that is the reason why. Modern people don't like Easter, it seems to them like it seems to Peter, an idle story. A fairytale. Town rumor. Exaggeration. It is none of these things. This story had every chance to be disproved, and it never was, not in their time, and not in ours. Jesus rising from the dead is the only explanation for what happens, and the only explanation for the Christian faith taking off the way it has. People don't like that we have to base this on hearsay, because they think that hearsay isn't reliable. People lie, they forget, they exaggerate. True, they do. But Luke and all the others who were digging into this made it clear that this was what happened. They talked to witnesses and then passed that data down. The resurrection of Jesus cannot be disputed reasonably, it simply is what happened, and if it happened it means that everything Jesus said is true.

And everything Jesus said was building toward this moment. We all die, and we all have to grapple with the unpleasant reality of how death steals all meaning from the work that we do. Nothing lasts. Jesus came to address that head-on, and He does it here. By rising from the dead, He makes it so that our lives and our deaths mean a great deal. They are part of Him. The good Christian work that we do is part of Jesus, and so it is eternal, it lasts forever. Jesus will never forget all the ways we've loved our neighbor, all the twists and turns our life took, all the people that were so dear to us. Our life's story doesn't end when we die, and Easter makes that possible. It makes it real. As real as Jesus' life was, as

real as Jesus' death was, and as real as our death will be. We will live again, but more than that, all we do here will live forever with us. Our memories. Our loves. Our families. Our stories. Our works. It all lives in eternity with the Jesus that rose this day.

Amen.