

HOLY WEEK



Prayer

Let us pray for the whole church of God in Christ Jesus which lives in the perpetual joy of His resurrection, and for all people, that they might come to also share in those eternal joys.

Collect of the Day

Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

or

O God, for our redemption You gave Your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 16 (antiphon v. 10)

Isaiah 65:17-25

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Luke 24:1-12

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 458 or 466

Other Hymns – 465 (OT), 482 (E),

457 (G), 463 (G), 474 (G), 467,

475, 487

O Lord of life and death, as in the fullness of time You did send forth Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bear the guilt and the punishment of all our sins and the sins of the whole world on the tree of the cross, and on the third day did raise Him from the dead for our justification and eternal salvation, so receive our humble thanks and joyous praise that we bring before You this holy day: Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

O Lord of life and death, bestow upon Your Church throughout the world the power and guidance of Your Holy Spirit so that it may boldly proclaim and confess the resurrection of Your Son from the grave. And grant that we and all who hear the Easter message of His empty tomb may turn from sin, trust in Him alone, worship Him with reverence and awe, and so receive forgiveness and eternal life: Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

O Lord of life and death, Ruler of all, bless the nations of the world with justice and peace. In every land curb the evil of corruption and self-interest and violence. Provide leaders who govern wisely and justly. When times are prosperous, may our hearts be thankful, and in troubled times do not let our trust in You fail: Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

O Lord of life and death, visit the homes in which Your people dwell. Grant that husbands and wives, parents and children may live together in peace under Your protection and so come to share eternally in the blessings of Easter: Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

O Lord of life and death, in Your beloved Son You bring hope and life where there is only despair and death. Heal and strengthen those who are sick and hospitalized. Bless the medical treatments that they are receiving. And comfort all who weep for loved ones now fallen asleep with the Easter message that because He lives, we shall live also: Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

O Lord of life and death, these things and whatever else You would have us ask, we implore You to grant for the sake of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, who this day abolished death and the grave and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; and who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



HOLY WEEK SERMON

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD/EASTER DAY

April 17, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 24:1-12

'No Body Found'

“They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” This is the foundation and basis of everything that we believe, teach, and confess as God’s forgiven people. Our faith and hope in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting all hinges on the fact that, when Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women went to Jesus’ tomb to give him a proper burial, “they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

If they had found Jesus’ body, then he is not raised from the dead—“and our faith and hope is in vain and we are of all people most to be pitied,” as St. Paul writes in First Corinthians.

But why? Because in Adam all die. We are all conceived and born in sin, the sin we inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve. The sin that we are born with is much more than the things that we think, say, and do that are wrong. While our sinful actions are serious and cause great harm to ourselves and those around us, the ultimate consequence of the sin that we are born with is that it leads to our death. We deeply grieve death and experience such intense sorrow over it because it is completely contrary to the life that God intended and created for us to live.

But today we celebrate the fact that they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus when they went to his tomb. With great joy we shout out ‘alleluias’ and sing praise to God because sin has been overcome. Death is the last enemy that has been destroyed. In the cleansing, healing, and forgiving blood of Christ Jesus, we are a new creation. We who were once dead in our trespasses have now been made alive in Christ.

St. Paul teaches us, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” Through his life, Jesus satisfied God’s demand for perfect obedience—the perfect life of obedience that we can never live. The forgiveness of sins, victory over death, and life eternal with God and his people is ours because Jesus atoned for our sins through his sacrificial death.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,” so St. Paul also says. The free gift of eternal life that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord is not some fantasy or false hope, but is tethered to the historic fact that our Lord rose from the dead on that first Easter Sunday.

We have the testimony to this fact from the women who went to the tomb at early dawn expecting to prepare Jesus’ body for burial, but instead found the tomb empty. We have the angels who welcomed the women at Jesus’ tomb with the rhetorical question, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” and then proclaimed the Good News, “He is not here, but has risen.” Even more, the angels opened the Scriptures up to the women when they directed them to remember Jesus’ words, while he was still in Galilee, “that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

This affirmed for the women (and for all of us still today) that the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus was all part of the divine plan of salvation as foretold by the ancient Scriptures and by our Lord himself. When these historical facts were explained by the angels and interpreted by the divinely inspired Word, the women were enlightened and faith followed. They remembered Jesus’ words and in faith they were transformed by the angels’ proclamation that Jesus was not in the tomb but had risen according to the Scriptures.

The women then became the first evangelists when they returned from the tomb and told the others what they had seen and heard. Their report, however, was met with doubt and unbelief. Peter, who was among the apostles that day, had experienced his own share of doubt and unbelief. Although Peter had at one time boldly claimed that he would never fall away from Jesus, his actions of denying even knowing Jesus three times said otherwise. But on this day, after hearing these things, Peter rose and ran to the tomb and confirmed his hope for himself that Jesus was not there.

Beyond the testimony of these witnesses who found the tomb empty, we have the testimony of many others who saw and interacted with Jesus after his resurrection. St. Paul reports this in his letter to the Corinthians, “[Jesus] appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time...”

No, the Easter resurrection is no idle tale. “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” So the apostle Paul says to the doubters and sceptics of his day and our day.

Jesus’ resurrection, his empty tomb, the eyewitness appearances, are not simply matters of faith. They are matters of fact. Faith clings not only to the fact that these things happened, but to God’s promise through what happened; namely, Christ overcame death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us.

“On the third day he rose again from the dead.” So we thus confess in the Creed. And why? Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental reality on which we base our faith in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

“They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” The resurrection clinches it. Your sin is forgiven. Your death is defeated. The new creation has dawned. Jesus is risen and we shall arise! Amen.