

He Has Risen! He is Now Here!

Easter Sun. – 04/17/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 24:1-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 6, [The angels tell the women,] **“He is not here, but has risen!”**

Introduction

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ I could have used those words from the angels as the sermon title this morning. It would have been accurate, but I'd like to submit that those words, in and of themselves, can still communicate the wrong message to so many people around us in our world today.

→ The reason is that, while it is true, Jesus could no longer be found in the tomb that day, for those of us here in Christ's church centuries later, we come to church on Easter, waiting to hear not only that, Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* But also we need the assurance of what that fact means for us now today. We need to know that Christ's empty tomb 2000 years ago means that He Is Now Here!

→ Changing that one word – “not” to “now” – addresses the prolific confusion and fear that we face today so that it gives way to a confident faith and hope in the very real presence of Jesus who is with us here and now! Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

I. Confusion and Fear: Where is Jesus?

✘ But back then, when the women met the angels, they needed to hear that Jesus was not in the tomb. They needed to be reminded of Jesus' words that He would rise from the dead on the third day just as the Angels told them.

→ After all, they came to the tomb expecting to care for a dead body. They brought all of the spices required to prepare the body of a man who died on the cross. So, when they arrive, they're confused. The stone is rolled off to the side and the tomb contains no body. Where is Jesus? His body has disappeared. They're “perplexed” (v.4). They can't fathom what has happened.

✘ Then the angels appear. These heavenly beings frighten the women. Often we have a totally false understanding about angels. We think of them as cute, cuddly, baby-like cherubs. But the Bible describes them as powerful beings who cause people to automatically fall to the ground in fear and awe. That's what verse five says the women do; “they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground”.

→ Yet the angels really aren't there to frighten the women. They have actually come to assure them; to remind them; to bring a faith back to life inside of them. And they do so with a simple message. “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? He is not here, but has risen'.” That's the good news that the women needed to hear at that time.

✘ And watch what happens next. Verses 8-9 say, “They remembered His words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.” So often we think that they first believed that day because they saw Jesus in the flesh. But Luke says they remembered and they believed. All they've seen with their eyes is an empty grave and some angels. And yet, with an active, living faith, they dash away to tell the disciples the wonderful news of the first Easter morning. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

- Such a quick transformation – confusion and fear instantly changed into belief and hope. Soon enough they do see Jesus, and they know exactly where He’s at. Not in the tomb, but with them. But at that moment, Jesus is not there.
- ✘ I wonder – do we struggle with the same emotions as the women did back then? So many of us today are confused and frightened, not at a stone rolled away or by encountering angels, but by the things that life throws at us every day; things that make us ask, “Where is Jesus?” Honestly some of this stuff is so messed up; so frightening that it seems like He’s not here.
 - There’s so much racial and ethnic tension and unrest that this country; this world erupts with protests and war. Institutions and entire systems are being forced to rethink how they are treating; even defining people today. Those in authority – who have been so highly respected in the past are now being demonized. Protests turn into riots and destruction. Vandalism and crime goes unprosecuted. And anger, hate, and violence divide us into political camps with no avenue or interest in trying to get along and work together. No wonder you and I are so confused and afraid; wondering where Jesus is at in this mess.
 - And with all of that, I’m not even talking about anything connected to the world-wide pandemic and all of the “experts” with contradictory and opposing views on the topic. Even here, in the church of Christ, division rages on. People leave the church and turn away from their risen Savior because one or more sets of people can’t see eye to eye about things like masks, safety protocols, vaccines and what it looks like to show love and care for each other as fellow believers; as fellow citizens and neighbors. In the end it leaves us so confused and afraid; wondering where Jesus is at in this mess.
- ✘ There are a lot of very real question marks among believers in Christ right now. Attendance at church is down in all denominations and Christian gatherings at this time. Will the Christian Church be able to continue long-term? Just as in many arenas today, workers in the Church are weary and under attack no matter what decisions they make. Members are feeling the pressure too. The answers are not always obvious, so there’s confusion and fear. Where is Jesus?
 - Add to all of those things, the things that have attacked and troubled people throughout the centuries. Everyday life has always led to us growing older and weaker; struggling with disease and loss of mobility; facing the inevitable death of those we love the most. And seeing it all can leave us confused; even more so, frightened! Where is Jesus as all this happens?

II. Where is Jesus? He has risen! He is *now* here!

- ✘ You see, no matter who you are or what you’ve seen or what you’re facing right now, we all need to hear that Jesus has risen and Jesus is here! Yes, He is right here, right now!
- ✘ Where? Imagine a baptismal font, like this one front and center before us today. Before the service, a member of the altar guild pours warm water into the basin. A white napkin is placed on the side. The mom and dad, holding the baby, step to the font, with sponsors at their side. The pastor begins the baptismal liturgy and soon the moment arrives. The mother lowers her child over the water. The pastor speaks the child’s name and then pours water over the child’s head, three times in the name of the triune God.
 - Where is Jesus at that moment? Right here! Because He is risen, Jesus now lives in that child where faith and hope have come to life and are renewed as well in those who witness the miraculous resurrection of Christ right before their eyes. Remember friends, at one time it was within you that Jesus came to live at the baptismal font.
 - Where is Jesus? Look at the altar as well. With joyful service and preparation, the members of the Altar Guild again have prepared wafers of bread as well as both individual cups and the

chalice with wine. Eventually the pastor speaks the familiar words. "On the night when Jesus was betrayed ... 'Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you ... Drink of it, all of you; this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins'." As you come forward to kneel or stand at the rail and the bread passes over your tongue, followed by the wine. Where is Jesus at that moment? Right there, in His body and His blood. Because He is alive, He now comes to you and lives in you through His sacramental meal. He renews your faith and strengthens you to serve Him and others throughout the week to come. He is not in the tomb. His own words are bold and clear, He is here in our midst; in our church; in your life, because, Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

→ Where is Jesus? Open up a Bible, find the many passages of promise, like Matthew 28:20, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age", or John 11:25-26 where Jesus says, "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."

→ Listen to what Isaiah promises in our Old Testament Reading, that a day will come when Jesus will return and we will see Him face-to-face. Or listen to Paul in our reading from 1 Corinthians. The last enemy to be destroyed is death so that Jesus, leaving the tomb empty, is now the firstfruits of the rest of us who will follow Him in rising from the dead as well on the day of His return.

→ When you read passages from God's Word like these, where is Jesus? He is moving and He is working in you; building up your faith and renewing your hope by the power of His Holy Spirit.

✘ Now remember what the women did after the angels reminded them of Jesus' words. Their faith came to life and their hope returned so that they ran and told the disciples. They didn't just stay at the tomb in their confusion and fear. No, they went back to their lives with the risen Jesus present at their side and inside of them.

→ Friends, today we do the same. We leave this worship service; a service where Jesus has promised in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them." And we go back to our lives; back to the injustice and anger; back to division and strife; back to sickness and aging muscles. But we do not go back alone. We go back with Jesus! We go back with a powerful message, that Christ is risen and He is now here! *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Conclusion

✘ So many people, when they first come to church or think about what it means to be a Christian think that wherever Christ might be, there can no longer be any misery. But the truth, as Jesus teaches us, and as experienced believers eventually come to understand, is that wherever misery is, Christ will be there!

→ Think about what that means; let it sink in just a bit. Because Christ came to this sin-filled world and because He comes to you and me as people who are sinners to the core, is it right to believe that life in Christ, while we are here on earth will be easy? No way! But where there is misery, there Christ is! So, as you leave this Easter service today, go with that comfort and a confident faith; with a life in the risen Christ knowing that even in the midst of the misery, you have the living hope and assurance that you to will rise one day just as Jesus has. Yes, your grave will be empty too, because Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ As I think of my own grave, I think first of the graves of those family members who have died in Christ before me. I encourage you to do the same. I think of my Great-grandparents and grandparents and an older brother whose graves are north of us in Windsor. I think of my Mom

and my Dad's and my sister's graves in Ft. Collins. And I think of so many of the graves of those whose burials I presided over as their pastor.

→ Where is Jesus as we look at death face to face? He is right here with us. He is now here with us, keeping their bodies and their souls; keeping our souls safe in His presence until He comes to bring us to our Father's heavenly home, body and soul recreated and reunited again before the throne of God in His eternal glory!

- ✘ The women staring at an empty tomb needed to hear the words, "He is not here, but has risen" (v.6). But you and I, for a living faith and a confident hope, we need to hear those words differently. We need to hear the message: He has risen and He is now here! You can say it, "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" Amen.