

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the twenty-fourth chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He

spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" ⁸ And they remembered His words. ⁹ Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest...

Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." ³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food

here?" ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³ And He took it and ate in their presence. ⁴⁴ Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ "And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that You would increase our faith through them.
Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

HE IS RISEN! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

It is only fitting that as the first women came to the tomb of their Savior very early in the morning that we, too, would gather very early in the morning and come to see the empty tomb.

What a sight they were allowed to behold. They saw the stone rolled back and they were afforded the privilege of seeing God's holy angels... but I think the words that they heard are far more important than what they saw, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen!" Wow... what a powerful

and yet what a simplistic message that the angels shared with the women.

And in like manner what a simple and powerful message that Jesus Christ shared with His disciples once He opened the scriptures to them. He shared with them the reason that everything had happened to Him as it did and the reason is simple and very powerful; it was so that ***repentance and remission of sins*** might be preached.

Yes, it is indeed Easter, and we hear about Jesus Christ who rose from the dead on Easter morning... but we need to remember why He did this. Jesus did not rise from the dead because He was bored of being dead, He did not rise from the dead because He wanted to show off a cool parlor trick He learned, He did not even rise from the dead so that He could go back to heaven... no Jesus rose from the dead to show that all the

words spoken about Him were true and now all prophecy was fulfilled.

When Christ rose from the dead He showed that He truly had power over the earthly and spiritual elements of this world and the next. When Christ rose from the dead He showed that His life was His to lay down and to pick up again. When Christ rose from the dead He did it so that you and I could believe.

For if Christ did not rise from the dead, we have faith in nothing. In fact Saint Paul tells us, “***But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty... And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.***” Paul truly recognized and preached the reason that Jesus had to rise from the

dead. If Jesus did not rise, we have no reason for faith and we have no reason for hope.

And even though Christ has risen from the dead, we can see His disciples have some difficulty with this. Jesus has risen from the dead and He appears to them in bodily form... and they are afraid.

I wonder how many of us have asked for a sign from God, maybe even for Jesus to appear before us and that would really solidify our faith; yet, even the disciples who saw Jesus risen did not immediately believe. Thus when we ask for signs and miracles, do we really suppose that we can expect a stronger and more perfect faith than the disciples? When we ask for a sign and a miracle, as we remember from one of our Lenten sermons, we are tempting God and He has promised that NO SIGN will be given... except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the fish three days, so Christ

would be in the belly of the earth for three days... and this is the sign that we celebrate and receive graciously today.

For even if God were to provide a different sign and one that we request, just like the disciples we would be afraid and we would cower. Just imagine if Jesus were truly to appear before you right now... what would you say? Sorry for doubting. Sorry for mocking you. Sorry for making light of your promises. All of these would be appropriate and yet we need not utter any of these.

For just as Christ gave to His disciples, so He has given to us: He has given us His word. Jesus taught the disciples His word, which was written about Him, and then their minds and hearts were opened and they believed.

And what did Jesus teach them? That the Christ must be arrested and condemned to

die a death for all men. That He would be treated poorly and He would be hung on a cross. But that three days later He would rise from the dead. He would rise and repentance and remission of sins would be preached in His name.

And now, through faith in all that Christ has done, we have the remission of sins that He has promised us. We do repent of our sins, we turn from the sins that we commit and acknowledge the error of our ways, and because of all that Jesus has done for us, we have the remission, the forgiveness, of all of our sins.

This morning I bring you the final meal in our 'meals of Lent' ... which really this is the meal of Easter. As Jesus is standing amongst His disciples bodily, fully human and fully God, He asks them for something to eat. Not only did He allow them to touch and feel that He was truly present, but He wanted to

show them through a very familiar thing... and how many times have we discussed the meals that Christ and His disciples partook of.

Jesus, also, wants to come to you this closely and this intimately. When we pray before meals and invite Him to be our guest, when we come to Him because no one else can help, when we trust in Him and know that our faith is never put to shame... then we are drawing near to our Christ and He to us.

Thanks be to God that He has given us such a Savior who is willing to meet us in our weakness and raise us up. Thanks be to God that He sent His Son to dine with us constantly when we have faith in Him, hear His word, and receive His very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. And thanks be to God that now that He is arisen, repentance and remission of sins is preached in His name.

HE IS RISEN! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!