

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sins for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours 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 Mark the sixteenth chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" ⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled

away-- for it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷ "But go, tell His disciples-- and Peter-- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." ⁸ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth.
Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Risen and
Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ,

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

After spending the past six weeks in Lent, a time of sorrow, a time of repentance, a time to stop and examine ourselves and our sins, we have finally come to the Highest of High Festivals of the church year. Today is Easter Sunday. Today is the day where we come together to worship and honor our Risen, our Resurrected, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Today is the day in which we so readily and triumphantly proclaim: ***He is RISEN!***

Of course, while we are very boisterous and triumphant today... how did you feel coming out of church on Good Friday? I can imagine that we felt very much like the women in our text for today.

As they awoke, after honoring the Jewish Sabbath, they came to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for a proper burial. Though they had been disciples of Christ and had heard Him speak, they came figuring that just another man had died and now they were

going to prepare Him to rest. And I have a feeling that many Christians feel the exact same way.

Though Easter is a very triumphant day and a very satisfying day... throughout the rest of the year there is a lot of dismay and, maybe even, unbelief. We go around like the women fearing that our Lord is dead, never to rise again. We are persecuted by the world, we are taunted and mocked because of our beliefs, we are ridiculed because we would dare claim that a man rose from the dead.

However, the trials are not just from the outside. From within our reason and our logic taunts us: He died! You will die too! There is nothing after death, NOTHING! You will not rise, you will not see Him, you will become worm food!

Satan is also tempting us to run away from our Savior by pushing all of the right buttons every day of our lives. He tells us lies just like he told Adam and Eve: you can be like God, you don't have to worry about your sin... heck you don't sin that much, you're all right just as you are, you don't need a Savior.

We are assailed on every side and it can slowly wear on us. Maybe we give in to the pressure from the outside world and begin to take more pleasure in the things of the world than we take in our Savior. Maybe we give in to our sinful flesh and think "maybe I will just die and there is nothing else for me." Maybe we give in to satan and deny Christ... and we would not be the first. Remember stout-hearted, brave, Peter... he too denied Christ. And spending 364 days away from the one day that we celebrate Easter can be taxing... I can only imagine how taxing those three days were for Jesus'

disciples who had to watch Him die, and now we have just spent those same days mourning the death of our Savior, lamenting the fact that I have been so imperfect, regretting the fact that even since Friday I have continued to sin and thus continued to be the reason Christ had to suffer and die.

But dear friends in Christ, we need not feel this way. We do not need to feel it today, tomorrow, or any of the 365 days in a year (366 in a leap year). We do not need to be afraid, we do not need to be alarmed... we need to focus our attention, our love, our devotion, our hearts, our minds, our souls on one thing and one thing only... He is RISEN!

Jesus Christ is risen today! He is not in the grave, nor was He on that Easter morning. Death could not contain Jesus, because Jesus is life. Jesus was not found in the grave because Jesus has defeated death and it

could not hold Him. Jesus was not found in the grave, as the angel tells us, “He is not here!” Though many people wish that Jesus had remained dead, dear friends, our faith is built upon the notion that Jesus Christ is not dead, He is RISEN, and He is risen for each and every one of us.

Today, on Easter Sunday, and especially on every day of our lives, we can focus on the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed raised from the dead. Yes, He was born, He lived, He suffered, and He died... but today and always we can know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He rose three days later to proclaim that He has won the victory over death, hell, and satan. He rose to show that we do not need to fear our own death, for the death in this life is the beginning of our eternity with Him. He rose from the dead to show us what will happen to those who believe in Him and have faith in all that He has done.

As Luther says, “And as the Lord Christ has conquered death, He has also conquered sin... Thus sin, like death, attacked the wrong man, and so grew weak and died in His body. And likewise the devil wanted to prove his power over Christ, and uses all his might against Him, trying to bring Him down. But He meets with a higher power which he cannot overcome. And all this has been wrought in order that our Lord Christ might glory because by being cast down He was lifted up on high, and these three mighty foes, sin, the devil, and death, must now lie under His feet. This great victory we celebrate today. Now all power consists in this, that we take it well to heart and firmly believe it.”

Yes friends, just as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, so too shall you be. You will be raised from the dead when you believe that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose for

you. He did all of this to remove all of your sins, He did all of this to redeem you, He did all of this because He loves you. As St. John tells us (1 John 3:16), “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” And again (1 John 4:10), “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God sent Jesus Christ to appease His wrath, God sent Jesus Christ to live, die, and rise again for us... This is love.

Dear redeemed children of our Risen and Resurrected Lord, today we have the greatest prize one could ask for, today we can celebrate that our Lord and Savior is risen from the dead, and that by His rising to life, we now have life also. Because of all that Jesus has done for me, I now know, I now believe that heaven is mine and one day I will see it.

Thank God that He sent His Son to live, die, and rise for me. Thank God that His Son Jesus Christ is my redeemer, my Savior. And thanks be to God that He loved me and He gave His Son to be my salvation.

Dear friends, He is RISEN! He is RISEN indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.