

Sermon Easter Sunday 2024 “Your Redeemer Lives!”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*] Alleluia!
Dear fellow redeemed of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, we just sang the beloved hymn, ***I Know That My Redeemer Lives.***

We know . . . but those women did not. They went that morning *expecting* a dead body - a corpse that still needed its final preparation for a proper burial. Everything happened so suddenly on Good Friday that they didn't even have the spices at that time. Now they'd bought them and went to that awful place.

They didn't know how they would get to that body - who would roll that enormous stone away, or even if the soldiers would allow such a thing.

Even when they got there and found the stone already rolled away and an angel sitting in the tomb told them the good news of the resurrection, they were too confused to rejoice; they were too astonished to understand or think straight.

They simply did not know what was happening or how to put all the pieces together. Death they knew; death gripped their minds and hearts, death with all its sadness and grief.

In all likelihood, you've been there and know exactly what they were going through. Death is the ultimate repudiation of the life God granted us, for death is the “**wages of sin.**”

A year ago on Monday of Holy Week I got the phone call telling me my brother wasn't expected to live out the day.

When you stand at the side of a hole in the ground and watch your loved one lowered into it, you know those women's sadness.

Death grabs you by the throat. Sometimes, it's sudden; other times, it's drawn out. Sometimes, it's expected, and sometimes not. Sometimes, the dead one is old and wrinkled, and sometimes, oh so very young. But it is always devastating.

Like those women, death we know, death grips us, death surrounds us, death and its sadness and grief.

But today, we look death in the face - death in all its horrible, destructive terror - and say: **I know that my redeemer lives! O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?**

As those women and the disciples would soon come to realize, Jesus' tomb wasn't empty because some grave robber or gardener had taken His lifeless body somewhere else, but because death could not hold Him. He is Risen!

Death could not hold the one who (as Isaiah said) **swallowed up death.**

When Jesus paid the full wages of sin, when He atoned for sin, death was stripped of its power, and Jesus rose to life again.

Death is no longer the terrible, final, unconquerable end for all men and women - ***it is now a servant of Jesus Christ!***

Should the women and disciples have known this? At least of Jesus' resurrection? Perhaps. As Paul said, this was ***all in accordance with the Scriptures.***

Jesus' sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection were predicted and spoken of in the Old Testament. The resurrections of many dead folks on Good Friday foreshadowed this.

The sign of Jonah pointed to this. The Psalms and Isaiah and other prophets spoke of this. Jesus Himself told His disciples *three times* that He would ***die and rise again.***

This was God's plan to save fallen humanity all along, and now, finally, it was finished, a done deal.

Sin, death, grave, Satan, and hell all now lay defeated. ***For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!***

Notice how St. Paul now talks of death. He says that Christ died and was buried, but after that, he says that ***some have fallen asleep.***

That's what death is for us now. It's finality defeated; it has been transformed into a long nap for us. When you're united to Jesus, ***you fall asleep in death, but you wake up in Paradise.***

And you are united to Jesus. For your baptism united you to Christ in His death ***and*** resurrection.

Jesus joined you in your death so that you might join Him in His resurrection.

He promised you as much in those baptismal waters when He gave you His forgiveness and everlasting life.

And so, when faced with your own death, you can say: ***I am baptized! Death does not own me; Christ does.***

I am baptized! Death is not the end; life is.

I am baptized! My sin cannot condemn me, for Christ forgives me.

I am baptized! And no hell is strong enough, no grave deep enough, and no devil terrible enough to separate me from my Redeemer.

I know that my Redeemer lives! His grave is empty, and so will mine be.

What comfort this sweet sentence gives, the hymn writer then added. Comfort not only to face death but to live life.

To live not afraid of what tomorrow may bring into my life, but knowing that if I have a Redeemer, a Savior, who has taken care of my greatest need and all my other needs as well.

Now, we usually don't think of needing our Savior's help in our times of prosperity, though we may acknowledge Him as the Giver of such times and gifts.

But good times are when we need Him and His presence most of all.

How easily can ease, comfort, wealth, and success cause us to forget about Him and cling to these things as false gods, as if our lives depended on them.

But as we remember today, our lives depend on Christ alone. Our life now and our life forever. Our life from birth and our life after death.

Or again, as the hymn writer put ***it: He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death.***

Daily breath. He gives it, and one day, He will take it away. He is *the Lord and Giver of life*, we confess in the Creed.

We often think we are in control. We want to define how we live and when we die. But that is not up to us.

Your Lord created you here and now to be His blessing to those around you. In His time, He will close your eyes in the sleep of death, gather you to Himself, and give you rest.

His empty tomb preaches that to us today. For it wasn't Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders, the Roman soldiers, or the sealed tomb that had control of Jesus' life and death. He did.

As He said, **I have the authority to lay down my life, and He had the authority to take it up again.**

And because He did lay down His life for you on the cross only to take it up again, you have nothing to fear.

That was the message of the angel to the women: ***Do not be alarmed***, though they were. And we sometimes are too, and that fear robs us of much joy in life!

Jesus has come to restore that joy and life, that no matter what this world and life throw at you, no matter how difficult things become, no matter what doubt, despair, or uncertainty descend upon you, you can look it all in the face, and say: **I know that my Redeemer lives!**

And one day, we're going to be like Israel when they arrived at the *eastern* shore of the Red Sea. On the western side, they were filled with fear and dread because they saw Pharaoh and his chariots and army coming to get them.

But once they passed through the sea to the other side and looked back and saw the waters of the Red Sea crash down on Pharaoh and his army and utterly wipe them out, they rejoiced with the song we sang in the Introit:

I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;

the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my song,

and he has become my salvation.

That's *our* song - of faith - now, because **He is Risen!**

One day, when we reach the other side of eternity, we'll look back and see how Christ has completely swallowed up all our enemies and that all along, we had nothing to fear.

And so that you might more confidently believe that your Lord comes to you today, here in His Body and Blood, for you to eat and drink.

Not His *dead* Body and Blood, but His *living* Body and Blood, born of the virgin Mary, hung on the cross, laid in the tomb, and now risen from the dead, He puts here for you now by the power of His Word.

A feast even better than Isaiah's rich feast of the best of meats and the finest of wines. Better than any feast we enjoy now for a time. For this is a feast that gives forgiveness of sin, life from the dead, and salvation from the enemy.

I pray that you may know, believe, be confident, and have no fear. That your song—not just on Easter but every day—may be: ***I know that my Redeemer lives!***

I know . . . For Christ is risen! [*He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*]
Yes, He is risen indeed, **for you. AMEN**