

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you conquered death and opened the gate to eternal life. Grant that we, who have been raised with him through Baptism, may walk in newness of life and ever rejoice in the hope of sharing his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be dominion and praise now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia. (Psalm 118:24)

**Sermon Text:**

*Death has been swallowed up in victory thanks be to God! Amen!*

(Scripture Lesson)

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

For the believer, the Christian, Easter comes with an excitement and joy that is second to none within the Church. Alleluia's ring from the walls as we praise our God for His grace and mercy. The world, however, doesn't see it that way, Easter bunnies and Easter egg hunts compete with Christmas presents and Halloween candy. In Corinth, things were not much different than they are today. The reason and intellect of Roman minds had quickly labeled life after death ludicrous. If people want to celebrate that's fine but let's at least understand that it's based on fables. Sounds familiar doesn't it? The supermarkets are willing to make a buck or two on the party but the world around us sits back and has decided the day, not unlike Christmas and the rest, really belongs to the children because no self-respecting person of intellect would buy into this discussion of dead men walking.

Paul is quick to point out the flaw. If we lose Easter and its message then let's throw in the towel. Then the excitement and the joy will disappear, and all of this discussion of Christ and His cross has been for nothing. Then Easter simply becomes a day of bunny rabbits and chocolates. However, Easter and the Resurrection are real events, true and historic moments, and because they are the joy and the excitement follow in the train of the truth. Today may we rejoice in the **RESURRECTION REALITY for IN CHRIST ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE!**

To say that our deliverance is certain presupposes something. There must be something we need to be delivered from. Paul reminds us, *death came through a man ... in Adam all die*. Transport yourself back to the Garden of Eden this Easter and witness the disaster. Created in the image of God, perfect and holy without sin or its guilt, Adam and Eve lived in paradise, really in heaven already, as they regularly walked and talked with God. One piece of fruit changed it all and as Adam and Eve sinned in multiple ways in mere moments, we are told the image disappeared from the nature of man.

**Text: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26**

<sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. <sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. – NIV

Paul's words ring true. Scripture tells us Cain, Abel, Seth and all human beings thereafter are not born in the image of the loving Creator but in the image of their sinful parents (Genesis 5:3). It is this truth that then leads David to cry out, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me* (Psalm 51:5)." And where there is sin, inborn or those we actually commit each day, well then the reward, the wages of sin – death (Romans 6:23) both physically in this life and eternally in the life to come.

You and I are born as children of Adam and Eve. A child of sinners, we are also born with sin already in our hearts. No one taught you to hate, lust, or desire that which was not your own, it was simply there, you inherited it.

Even our natural response to this truth as we try to cry out "unfair" cements it into our hearts. Paul told the Romans, "*the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so* (Romans 8:7)." Of course, we consider the teaching foolishness, unfair, even unjust. That's exactly what sin does with the truth of God's word. Only now as we voice our displeasure at the truth, we have added more sin to the poisonous pot of death that we are already destined to drink in our natural state.

Well that's not good! This is troubling indeed is it not? How can I correct this problem? The question assumes that our sinful nature is gone, it's not and so the only real answer is that in this state, there is nothing that we can do at all, we are dead and dead people don't do things.

The only hope that is left is found in the truth we celebrate this day. Paul tells us, <sup>21</sup> *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.* <sup>22</sup> *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.* Just as all humans were plunged into sin as one man, Adam sinned so also as one Man, Jesus Christ rises from death, we are saved. The entire life of Christ, the sinless life, the terrible suffering, the innocent death, and yes, the glorious Resurrection all give us the promise **IN CHRIST, ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE.**

The true pursuit of Christ then becomes to restore us to the image of God in whom Adam and Eve were created. Paul says this again as He speaks to the Colossians "*you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator* (3:9-10). Christ has delivered us, delivered us from the bondage of sin that was leading to eternal damnation in hell. He has delivered us from death to life, life eternal forever in heaven.

Christ lives then becomes a battle cry as the devil plagues you with sin. When He reminds us that by virtue of our birth, we deserve to die, we can respond with the certainty that is ours in the Resurrection. Our Savior lives and therefore, for all who are His through faith, given in Baptism, Christ becomes the first fruit. He is the guarantee of that which is to come.

Soon we will see plants beginning to bud some have even already started peaking out of the ground. As we see it we know more will follow. Christ rose, it is a certain fact established by multiple witnesses. Paul says He's the bud on the tree because we have seen Him, and we know that more, you, me, and your loved ones will follow.

No wonder there is joy and excitement at Easter. Christ's resurrection is the announcement that we do not get what we deserve. Instead, we are delivered. Delivered from the sin passed down to us, delivered from the sins we commit every day, and delivered even from the death that we deserve because of them. In the Resurrection, our deliverance is certain but what about the here and now?

Listen to Paul's careful warning. He cautions in our opening verse, *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.* What exactly does that mean? Paul here hints at how the Christian lives. In our striving to thank our Savior for the deliverance that is ours,

we do without, we deal with, and endure. The Christian life was never intended to be an easy one. For in this world, we deny our sinful pleasures and deal with the results as the world considers us to be strange and odd, even relics of a dead world long since past. We do without so that we may be with the Word and sacraments of God setting aside time for Him each week. And we even endure the hardships of this world with one singular hope on our minds, that hope which is ours in the Resurrection.

Paul says if this life is all there is and there is no Resurrection then what good is all of that? Why not instead chase after the pleasures of the world? Why not instead of offering time, talent and treasure should we not blow it all on expensive bobbles that last only for a moment? Why, then even our church and this pulpit are an extravagant waste of money. My time, this sermon, this service would all be a waste of effort.

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* All of chapter 15 is bent on proving that point. And what an important point it is. For with the Resurrection is the proclamation of total victory not only for God but for His people as well.

In this Victory there is hope! Paul tells us, <sup>22</sup> *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive.*<sup>23</sup> *But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.* We hope in the life that is ours through Christ Jesus. The life that is perfect, and deserving of our excitement and joy.

But Paul reminds us, “you wait for this.” Everything in its order, first Christ completes His saving work then and only then will we join Him. We do this through our deaths, the very thing that used to be so terrifying to us is now the gateway to eternal life with Christ. And it is all ours, through faith which connects us to our Savior.

Of course if we wait the question comes up, what should we do with the time in the middle? Again, Paul offers advice this morning. <sup>24</sup> *Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.* <sup>25</sup> *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* <sup>26</sup> *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* Remember who we are. We are victors, death, devil, sin all their evil power, dominion and authority is gone.

As we wait for our Victory to be realized in the joy of heaven, we have the opportunity to announce that victory. We announce it under the reign of Christ as he rules in our hearts and over the invisible Church of God. We announce the destruction of death and the devil not just to a room of people but to the world. And we endure hardship, trouble, even persecution, not in vain, but knowing that our victory is won and the benefits are quickly coming.

Easter is exciting not because of candies and fellowship, as nice as they are. Easter is joyous because of its message and that message changes the way we look at life and it changes the way we look forward to the life to come. Death has been defeated! **IN CHRIST, ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE.** Amen!