

Easter Sunday

April 12, 2020

**St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School
Arlington, MN**

EASTER COLLECT

P: 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 the 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.

C: Amen.

The Gospel—Luke 24:1-8

On Easter we see fear turned into joy.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Then they remembered his words."

Sermon

Revelation 19:11-16

Rev. Matthew C. Rauh

Victory!

Do you feel safe? Do you feel secure? You should. This is Easter. Christ Jesus is risen from the dead. It is a day of victory for him. It is a day of victory for all of us who believe in him. And because he lives, we have nothing to fear.

For our Easter sermon, we will turn to the Book of Revelation. Revelation can be an intimidating book with his fantastic visions of armies of locusts and beasts with seven horns. But God wants us to read it. Revelation starts off by saying, "***Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy.***" You and I will be blessed if we read it. Why? Because it tells us what is going on as the opening verses continue, "***... and blessed are those who hear and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.***"

Revelation may be labeled a "prophecy," but it is more a history book. It describes the history of the world from the time Jesus ascended into heaven to the time he returns, and to encourage us it gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like. Revelation is happening today. And it has one purpose: no matter how bad things get, and they will get really bad, we will not only survive, we will win thanks to Jesus Christ. So, let's get into Revelation chapter 19 and see a picture of the risen, victorious Christ.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him,

riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

I. Christ is ALIVE!

Back in my hometown is a bronze statue of a American World War One soldier, dedicated to all those fought and died in that war. Outside our Seminary in Mequon is a bronze statue of Police Captain Buntrock who died saving a child from a hostage situation. I have seen the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. and all those names as well as the Iwo Jima Memorial. Rochester has their Soldiers Park. St. Peter just erected their own memorial at Minnesota Square Park. We honor our heroes with statues and plaques.

If you wanted to carve a statue of Jesus to honor him for what he did, I suggest this reading from Revelation 19. We heard in our sermon on Good Friday how he battled and defeated the devil. Our hero had fallen to save us.

But there is a big difference here. This picture of Jesus in Revelation 19 is not a statue or memorial to a fallen hero. It describes Jesus as he is today, alive and well. On Good Friday Jesus died. The body they lifted off that cross was lifeless. To make sure, the Romans thrust a spear into his side. But on Easter, the third day for the Jews, the second day for you and me, Jesus rose from the dead. You want proof? Think of all the eyewitnesses: the women, disciples, Emmaus disciples, over 500 at one time; ask Thomas who was offered to put his fingers into the nail wounds. But don't just take their word for it. Listen to the angel from our gospel reading: ***"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"***

Jesus conquered death. This gives credence to Jesus words when he said, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though he dies."*** Jesus promises us we will rise from the dead if we should die. And to prove he can do it, Jesus died and rose from the dead. I know we live in fear of contracting COVID-19, or if not us, then someone else. But I ask you, what is more tragic, someone dying of this virus or someone dying in a car accident, or a soldier killed in action, or grandma quietly passing away in her sleep? They are all tragic. We don't have a cure or vaccine for death, but God has one: the Risen Jesus Christ.

Jesus will raise us from the dead, but not just back to life; he promises us a dramatic change. As God reveals in 1 Corinthians 15: ***"In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."*** Eternal life is nothing like life now. When Christ died on the cross, he died for the forgiveness of our sins. The sins you and I commit, and they are many, cannot keep us out of heaven. And when he takes us there, not only is the guilt of our sin removed, but sin itself. I will never again disappoint you, my family, my neighbor or God. Neither will you. And there are no stages in life ending in old age. The perishable becomes the imperishable.

This picture in Revelation 19 is a picture of our risen, victorious Christ. But I want you to know something. Throughout the Bible God gives us many pictures of Christ: the Lamb of God; a mighty lion; the Good Shepherd. But this picture in Revelation 19 is the very last picture God gives us of him. This is how God wants us to remember Jesus now. Yes, Jesus is victorious over death. But he is also victorious over everything else and he guarantees we will get through this world into heaven.

II. Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The last we saw Jesus was on Good Friday as he hung his head in death. Well, guess what? Jesus is done dying. It is finished. It is now time for him to rule and reign. The Apostle Paul put into practical

terms what this means. He writes to the Ephesians. In speaking of Christ, it says God raised him, “**...far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given. ... And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.**” Note the last three words: for the church. This is a picture of Jesus far above all other authority, and everything he does is for us, his Church.

And this is not the picture of a meek lamb. His eyes will be blazing. Maybe you heard of someone saying his eyes burn right through me. Well, Jesus will have eyes that his enemies could not even look into. He will be riding a white horse. In those old westerns, the good guy always wears white and the bad guy wears black. White here has the picture of righteousness, fairness, justice. On his head will be many crowns. It may seem comical to picture someone with one crown on top of another. But there is nothing comical about this. Each crown represents some other power or authority and Jesus is showing he rules over them. Read Habakkuk or Isaiah. When his people rejected him, God raised up the Babylonians to punish them, but when the Babylonians disappointed God, he raised up the Persians to knock them down, and then he knocked down the Persians. Powers of the world, understand this: God has the final word!

His robe is dipped in blood. Elsewhere in Revelation Jesus is pictured as a slain lamb, and we saints are pictured as wearing robes cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. But the blood here isn't Jesus' blood. It is the blood of all his enemies who died before him. Of course, he has a sword. Every king does. But this sword isn't in his hand. It comes out of this mouth. This is a picture of the Word of God.

I like the picture of a two edged sword. God's Word has the double effect of building up and tearing down. With that Word, God will show us our sins but then show us our Savior. But for those who don't believe, this very Word can tear them down. We see that two edged sword in John 3 and how God gave up his Son for us, “**... so that whoever believes will not perish, but have everlasting life ... but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**” See the two edges? The Word saves us, but if someone rejects, that Word will condemn as well.

And behind this mighty warrior is an army of angels. These are the very angels that protect you each day. These are the same angels who will scour the earth looking for all the saints so they can carry them into heaven.

This is a picture of Christ today, the last picture God wants us to have of him. What is God telling us here? This slain Lamb of God who died for your sins is risen and alive and he is destroying all your enemies before you. You will survive. You will leave this world behind for heaven itself.

In Catechism class, when we study the First Commandment, I ask the students, “Is worry a sin?” I believe it is a sin. First Jesus commands us not to worry in Matthew 6. So if you worry, you are disobeying God. But Worry is a First Commandment thing because it means we don't trust God. We assume the worse will happen. And even when things go from bad to worse, we assume that things are out of control and God is out of control. There is no way he can work this out for anybody's good. What does Revelation 19 say about that?

Most of Revelation talks about the enemies of God's Church whether it is governments who purposely persecute Christianity to liars, false teachers, and the anti-Christ. I ask you, is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords afraid of the atheists, the Romans, the scientists who arrogantly deny God's existence or power, the false teachers? Certainly not, and neither should we. The Church is under attack and Christians are being persecuted and killed. Christians is suffering. Revelation 19 is telling us they may hurt us, but we will win. And to those who are hurting us, it says, “Beware. Look at who you are dealing with.”

But persecution and false teaching are not the only enemies he will trample down. Go to Revelation chapter 6. There is you have the four horsemen of the apocalypse. One is on a white horse representing the influence of God's Church. But look at the others. The fiery red horse depicts wars and destruction, the black horse famine and the pale horse disease, and following them is death itself. These too will be destroyed. They, too, will be cut down.

See what I mean how Revelation is about today? Do you see why God wants us to see the risen Christ like this? He defeated death. He is riding on to victory before us and he promises we will win in the end. Look at the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Do you feel safe? Amen.