

Easter Sunday A 09 April 2023  
Matthew 28:1-10  
St Peter's Lutheran Church, Elizabeth  
Greg Bensted

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Grace and peace to you from God: Father, Resurrected Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The angel of the Lord says, "He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said." Let's pray: . . .

It's true. It's all true. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

That's the only thing that needs to be said today. In all truth, it's the only thing that can be said. That Jesus has been raised from the dead is the only thing I really have to tell you today. Nothing more. Nothing less. It's the same thing the angel told the two women who went to Jesus' tomb. He didn't tell them once but twice. "He is not here; he has been raised." "He has been raised from the dead." It was true. They saw Jesus. They touched him. They worshipped him. They heard his voice. It was all true.

For the longest of the Gospels, St Matthew keeps his account of the resurrection of Jesus brief. He doesn't go to great lengths to explain how it happened. He simply testifies that it did. St Matthew seems to be less interested in the details (as much as they can be known) and more interested in his listeners living the truth of Christ's resurrection and the seismic shift it has brought to people's lives. The truth of this story, as he records it, is earth-shaking. It changes the ground on which we stand and everything about the way we live.

Every year I come to Easter Sunday wanting only one thing. I want to be told and reminded that this story is true, that it can be trusted, that it's a reality in my life. And I want to celebrate it. I reckon that's true for everyone here today.

Why do I say that? Why do I come here every year wanting to be reminded the story is true? Why do I reckon that's what you want too?

Because I talk and pray with families who sit and wait at the bedside of their dying relatives for the nurse to come and turn off the life support. Because I sit on the telephone trying to comfort people and convince them not to take their own lives. Because I look around at the world in which I am a citizen and observe growing hostility toward the truth. Because I internalise the pain and devastation of Holy Week in the liturgies of the Church.

That's why I come here today wanting to be reminded this story is true. And I always leave here knowing that the truth of Easter – life, light, joy, hope, love – is greater than the truth of what brought me here.

And I know I'm not on my Pat Malone. I know you understand exactly what I'm talking about. You're no different to me. Every one of you could name a darkness you've faced over the last year. Some of you struggle to shake off darkness that's hung over your lives for years. Some of you are sitting in darkness this very moment.

That's why we keep gathering here wanting to be told and reminded that this story is true. Well, friends, you're in the right place. You won't leave here disappointed because the angel's message to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary in today's gospel is the Church's message to us today. "He has been raised from the dead." It's still true. Irrespective of what goes on in the world and what people believe, the truth is: Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

The story is true. You can count on it. It's for you and your life. It was true yesterday, it's true today, and it'll be true tomorrow. Sometimes it takes months or even years for resurrection to free us from the tomb and pull us out of the darkness, but it will. That's the promise of today. God will never leave you in the darkness of the tomb because his resurrection affection is for you.

The stone has been rolled away from the tomb. The day dawns with a new light. The earth quakes in celebration and joy. Christ is risen and in him so have we.

That's why this place is filled with light, candles, flowers, and alleluias. They're not just decorations and songs, they're God's truth about your life and my life. They're the signs of Easter truth and resurrection reality.

Today is why we experience so much joy when someone is baptised. We lose ourselves in the wonder, awe, and miracle of creation and human life. We know we're caught up in something otherworldly, heavenly. We're reminded of our own baptism and the promise Jesus made to us that he will always be with us. His resurrection guarantees his promise and our baptism into Christ joins us to his resurrected eternal life. All baptisms mirror for us Easter truth in our own lives. The only reason we can baptise is because of the truth that, "He has been raised from the dead."

Today reminds us that the light of resurrection always prevails. Darkness can't overcome the light. Regardless of who you are, the light prevails. Regardless of what you have done or left undone; the light prevails. Regardless of your doubts or beliefs, the light prevails. Regardless of your life's circumstances, the light prevails. The light of resurrection always wins. Everything about Easter says that we can trust that is true.

That changes everything about how we live. From the moment Jesus rose from the dead, God declared that every day hence will be Easter. Every day the tomb cries out, "He is not here. He is risen!" Every day light bursts out from the tomb like lightning, vanquishing darkness. Every day the empty tomb reminds us that death must always yield to life. Christ's resurrection isn't a one-day celebration. It's a way of life. It means every cross flowers with new life, every darkness has been overcome by light, and every tomb gives way to the promise of new birth.

It's true. It's still true. It'll always be true. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds safe in the Risen Christ Jesus. Amen.