

Easter Day A
April 24, 2011
Family of Christ Lutheran Church
Chanhassen, Minnesota

Pastor Jerry Wahl

Grace and peace to you from God who makes all things new

Jesus the Risen One

And the Holy Spirit- God's power and love in the world.



“And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb in grief and pain. Mary walked to Jesus’ grave, expecting to find death. It’s understandable. Images of violence filled the people’s minds. Thoughts of their vulnerability and mortality deadened their spirits. Death had become the defining story of their lives. She discovered the stone rolled

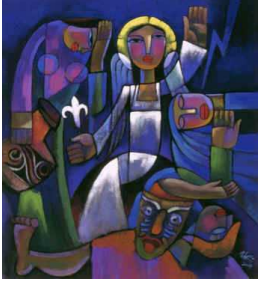
away and seeing no body she ran, she ran as fast as fear can move you, to Peter, John and the disciples and they came running. What do you think about when running? Where is He? Where did they take him? Then they arrive, they look inside, Linen neatly folded on the stone. Nowhere to look, nowhere to go, the disciples, confused, frightened, searching is over-- they went home. But Mary remained. Weeping she prayed, and then looked inside, two angels sitting on the stone. Mary asks “Where have they have taken him.”



Mary then hears the voice, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She begs for the man to return the body. Then in one word, He simply says MARY, and in that moment, what was unknown becomes known, grief, sadness and despair

becomes relief, joy and a new life begins. The world changes in that moment. One word 'Mary.'

'Jesus tells Mary go now and tell the disciples, go tell my brothers and sisters.'



Bishop William Willamen (Methodist Bishop- Atlanta) inquires, here is my Easter question for you: Why Galilee?

"Galilee is a forlorn, out of the way sort of place. It's where Jesus came from, but that's about its only claim to fame. Jesus spent most of His ministry out in Galilee, the "out back" of Judea getting ready to go up to Jerusalem. All of Jesus' disciples seem to have hailed from out in Galilee. Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee getting His disciples prepared to leave Galilee and go up to the capitol city with Him. There, in Jerusalem, He was crucified and there He rose. But the moment He rose from the dead, says today's gospel, He headed back to Galilee. Why?

One might have thought that the first day of His resurrected life, the risen Christ might have gone straight for the palace, to the seat of Roman power, and appeared there.

"Pilate, you made a big mistake," the Risen Christ would say. "Now, it's payback time!"

One might have thought that Jesus would do something striking, appearing before the movers and the shakers, the influential and the newsmakers, those who had some power and prestige. Enter the Temple announce your presence. Caiaphas - see!

Rather he didn't go up to the palace, the White House, the Kremlin, and the Capitol. The places of power to show his power. He went to the outback, back to Galilee. Nobody special lived in Galilee, nobody except the followers of Jesus. Ordinary people, common folk.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, this is our hope. The risen Christ would 'Come back to us.'

The resurrected Christ goes back, he appears before, the very same rag tag group of people who so disappointed Him, misunderstood Him, forsook Him and fled.



That first Easter, nobody actually saw Jesus rise from the dead. They saw Him afterwards. They didn't appear to Him; He appeared to them. In the Bible, the "proof" of the resurrection is not the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb; it's the presence of Jesus to His followers. The message of the resurrection is not first, "Though we die, we shall one day return to life." It is, "Though we were dead, Jesus returned to us."

It would have been news enough that Christ had died, but the good news was that He died for us.

It would have been news enough that Christ rose from the dead, but the good news was that He rose for us.

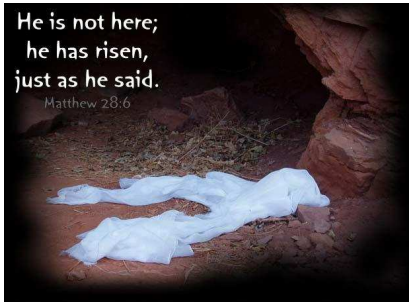
The resurrection of Christ is the single most important and powerful event in human history because crosses and empty tombs find love and grace in real life as Jesus appeared to his followers.

Humble hard working men and women's lives were changed that day. Peter, James, John, Mary his mother and Mary Magdalene all became witnesses to the resurrection. This small group changed the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Easter celebration today is marked by wonderful music, by flowers and family meals. Today we cling to hope and promises.

The reality is that the Christ whose resurrection we celebrate appeared to his people and because he is alive He also appears to us. To you and to me.

Because Jesus has healed the brokenness of the world he also heals the brokenness of our lives.



A man near death once said.

"I look back over my life, all the mistakes I've made, all the times I've turned away from Jesus, gone my own way, strayed, and gotten lost. And time and again, He came back for me. He found a way to get to me, showed up and got me, looked for me when I wasn't looking for Him. I don't think He'll let something like my dying get in the way of His love for me."

We wear sunglasses that protect us from the bright rays of the sun. Sometimes I think we wear sunglasses that prevent us from seeing the Son of God. Our lenses are darkened by self doubt, guilt from the past, worries and struggles, heartache and fear. We see only that which presses in upon us, not the possibilities of new life and new beginnings that Jesus offers.



All of us come here today looking for hope. Asking is it true that my life can be changed. Is it possible that this is true, that hopes for today and tomorrow can be a reality in my life?

The Easter announcement, is Jesus Lives, His spirit brings peace and joy to your life and mine. Look for him and welcome Him into you life. Say a prayer and then listen.

As you leave know that He is not here, he awaits you at home, in your workplace at the family table, in the voices and smiles and laughter of friends and family.

He lives, IN you – your hands your voices, your compassion and care for others.

Do you see the Christ?

He is let loose in the world. Christ is Risen, We begin Living. Happy Easter.
Thanks be to God. Amen.