

SERMON FOR EASTER – APRIL 17TH, 2022

Easter C 2022 Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 “Brand New.”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

Dear fellow redeemed of the risen Christ Jesus, there is plenty of talk this time of year, people saying that the role of religion is to make this world a better place.

The world asserts that the purpose of religion is to improve ourselves and the world at large.

But Jesus **did not** come to make this world a better place. I’m sorry, he didn’t! No, He’d made this world a good place in the beginning - a perfect place - and we ruined it with our sin.

Adam, Eve, you, me - the list of sinners is long and distinguished. And even if Jesus had come to make this world a better place, you know what? We would simply ruin it again.

It happens in our lives; it happens in the world. Sin undermines, and at times, breaks our marriages, families and our friendships.

Sin tears people apart and causes division.

Sin causes strife between nations and ethnicities and skin colors.

Sin seeks to divide, conquer, use, and manipulate.

And so the man made religions of the world all say that if we just try hard enough, we can develop brotherhood of, by exercising the good impulses that are in us all.

Well, it’s been tried. And it has failed. *For thousands of years* it’s been tried, and it has failed. The brotherhood of man based on our alleged innate goodness is a utopian pipe dream.

The poison of sin runs too deep and always breaks out in us, and in others. Despite **our very best** intentions.

Trying to stop sin is like the little Dutch boy who tried to plug the leak in the dam by sticking his finger in the hole, only to have another hole pop open, and then another. Soon, the whole dam comes down.

That is what sin is doing to us and our world. Poking holes in us. Decaying us. Killing us. **Ah, there it is!** Even if we could fix every other problem, we cannot fix death.

So, did Jesus come to make this world a better place? No. St. Paul told us today, **“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”**

Hope for this life only, what a puny, limited and miserable hope that is. So no, let other religions and teachers set such little goals – their God is too small.

Jesus has not come to make this world a better place but to rescue us from what we have done, and ultimately, to create a brand-new earth, free from the curse of sin.

Jesus came to save us from sin and death, which is the wages of sin, and from hell that was our eternal destination because of our sin.

For you see, what Jesus did that first Easter morning was not repair the dam but poke holes in hell!

He came to destroy the devil, his work and his kingdom, that they'd have no more power over us.

And in so doing, he gave us not a patched up, repaired world, but a new kingdom - as He promised through Isaiah: **a new heaven and a new earth; a** world so completely new that these made for this world bodies in the pews today couldn't live in it.

So, the ultimate promise of Easter is that we'd one day receive new resurrected bodies and live forever with God in a brand-new heaven and earth.

New, with sin forgiven. New, with sin, death, and the devil banished, from our bodies and from our lives.

For St. Paul said, **"Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."**

That means that Christ is just the *first* of those who will rise from the dust of death, which now to Him is nothing more than waking up from sleep!

"For," St. Paul continues, **"as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead."**

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

And so, yes, *our bodies too* will rise from the sleep of death to live in the new heaven and the new earth with Jesus in righteousness and purity forever.

So new, so wondrous, so profound is this truth that nobody truly understood it when it happened the first time.

The ladies who went to the tomb that morning were no doubt expecting everything to be the same as when they left it on Good Friday; they were looking for the old - old body, old death, old grave, same old, same old.

That's why the angels ask: *what are you doing?* **"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."** Or in other words, why are you looking for the old? **He has made all things new!**

That's why the disciples didn't get it either. When the women reported to them that "The grave is empty, **He is Risen,**" they thought the women were spinning idle tales.

And that's why so many today don't get it, who think Jesus is here to fix the old - that He is a great moral teacher. No!

Today we proclaim something much, much greater than that! **Jesus is risen from the dead** to make everything new.

Jesus has risen from the dead, and so nothing can ever be the same again. He bore our sins on the cross and atoned for them. He broke the grip of death in His resurrection.

And in His descent into hell, He humiliated Satan and stripped him of his power.

What other person or power could deliver us from such enemies or promise us such a future?

Truly, there is no other. Therefore, He is our hope in the sickbed and at the graveside. He is our hope when our burdens seem about to crush us. But I tell you, they cannot win. We have the One greater than all, and **He is risen!**

And this is not just some fairy tale or future hope while we suffer and languish here in this world and life.

For, in fact, Christ is already working in us, raising us to a new life and giving us His resurrection and victory - though it may, for now, be hidden in flesh that grows old and wears out.

In your baptism, you've already been given this victory and life now. Just as Pharaoh and his army could pursue Israel only to the Sea and no further, and were drowned in those waters, your sin can pursue you no further than the waters of Baptism!

For there, they are drowned and can pursue you no more. You are forgiven and free. Free to live your new, Christ life.

Though, to be honest, that's frightening, isn't it? Living a new life in an old world. A loving life in a hate-filled world. A forgiving life in a vengeful world. A generous life in a selfish world.

That's why the women and the disciples were frightened. The new is frightening because the old is so comfortable. The new is so different than what we know and are used to.

But look around. Shall we go back to the old? Shall we cower at sickness and death as if *they* had won? No, no, NO!

And so today we rejoice with St. Paul in announcing that **the last enemy to be destroyed is death**, and it **has been** defeated. For Christ is risen! And since we've been united to Jesus death and resurrection in Baptism, we too will rise.

And so today we rejoice with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, as they join us at this altar, where our risen Lord Jesus gives us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink, forgiving our sins and making us new.

Jesus said, "**I am the way the truth and the life.**" The Lord's Supper is Jesus putting into us that Life which cannot be extinguished, that Life that died and rose again, that Life that trampled down satan, that Life that left the grave behind and ascended into heaven, where we one day too will rise.

On that great and glorious day, our journey will be complete, but our life just beginning. A life begun here, already now, and lasting for eternity.

And the funny thing is, as you live this new life here and now, you *do* make this world a better place to live.

As you live the life of Christ, as you speak the Word of Christ, as you give the love of Christ, and as you forgive with the forgiveness of Christ.

In all these ways, you show the world that new life, that better life, that life of the world to come. And how can that *not* make a difference?

So rejoice on this day! And belt out your alleluias! For Christ, your life, has made you not just better but new. For Christ, your life, has changed everything. For Christ, your life, is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.