

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Easter Sunrise – March 31, 2024
John 20:1-18 – According to the Scriptures
Rev Peter Wagner

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Today we proclaim the mighty gospel in which we are being saved: the death and resurrection of our Lord. The strife is o'er, the battle done! All that the prophets wrote is accomplished. Our Savior died, but he is risen, according to the Scriptures.

So hear again from the epistle, from 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter of the Bible. Paul writes, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

According to the Scriptures. All of it was according to God's sure plan and prophetic word.

When our Lord was crucified, it was according to the Scriptures, in every detail. They cast lots for his tunic, to fulfill Psalm 22:18, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." He said, "I thirst," to fulfill Psalm 69:21, "For my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink." His legs were not broken, to fulfill Psalm 34:20, "Not one of his bones will be broken." And his side pierced with a spear, to fulfill Zechariah 12:10, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

But just as he died according to the Scriptures, now he is raised according to the Scriptures.

At first, when Mary Magdalene found the empty tomb, when Simon Peter and John heard her report and ran there together, "They did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

And the same was true later that evening, when he walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He said, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

And again that night, when he appeared to his disciples. He said, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations." According to the Scriptures.

For the very fabric of the Old Testament Scriptures, every line and every letter, all of it points to Christ. It points to the victory of our living Redeemer. Job was rescued and lifted from the ash heap, as an image of the resurrection. Joseph was rescued from prison and slavery, as an image of the resurrection. David was saved from all his enemies, as an image of the resurrection. The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt and saved through the Red Sea, as an image of the resurrection. And the exiles of Judah in Babylon returned to Jerusalem with rejoicing after seventy years, as an image of the resurrection. The resurrection of our Lord fulfills it all.

What is more, since Christ has been raised, therefore he is able to raise all who put their trust in him. As the same chapter of 1 Corinthians quoted earlier declares, chapter 15, "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Again, this was exactly as the prophets foretold, according to the Scriptures.

Death is swallowed up in victory! As the Scriptures foretold in today's Old Testament lesson, in Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces."

Death is swallowed up in victory! As the Scriptures foretold in Hosea 13:14, "I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?"

Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your sting?

For Christ has triumphed! He is living! Death could not contain him. Death tried to swallow him up, but how can finite hell swallow the infinite God? Nothing can contain the him. No tomb, no grave, not even hell itself. He burst forth, to make the vault of heaven resound. Alleluia!

“I know that my Redeemer lives,” said Job. He lives to fulfill the Scripture of Psalm 16:10, “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” He lives to fulfill the Scripture of Isaiah 26:19, “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.” He lives to fulfill the Scripture of Isaiah 53:10, “When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days.”

And he lives to proclaim his triumph over sin and death and hell, according to the Scripture of Isaiah 14:9, “Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come.”

Today, he rises to stir up hell, to throw it into an uproar. Hell is overwhelmed by his victory. Death is destroyed by his life. He annihilates the domain of darkness and takes it captive.

Hell took a body, and discovered God. It took earth, and encountered heaven.

Christ is risen, and you, O death, are annihilated! Christ is risen, and the evil ones are cast down! Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life set free!

Christ is risen, and the grave is emptied of its dead. For Christ having risen from the dead, is become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. To him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

Now may the triumphant risen King fill you with his life, and bring you at last to his victory feast in Paradise. Amen.