

April 5, 2015
He is not here!

“He is risen, he is not here.” In Mark, this was the message of the angel to the ladies as they entered Jesus’ tomb to tend his body. Luke tells it just a little differently though. There we see two men in dazzling apparel suddenly appear next to the women. Their message is this: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” Personally, I like Luke’s account the best. Not because of the angels and not because I think that it is more accurate. Rather, I like it because of the angels’ question to the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

It has been said, and perhaps all too accurately, that we Lutherans like to preach the events of the cross but leave out the resurrection. In defense of the many Lutheran pastors who proclaim the cross, when we talk about the cross we are using shorthand for all three days from Good Friday to Easter. But, that is no excuse, because what good is shorthand if the people don’t understand it. Christ is no longer on the cross; Christ is no longer in the tomb; He is alive and well, ruling over all that has been given to him.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! These words are a wonderful celebration, a wonderful acknowledgement of truth. And, we use them to break the silent, solemn, self-examination of Lent and replace that with the ecstatic, exuberant elation of Easter.

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Furthermore, there is a reason why we say it for several weeks to come. That reason being, we

believe he is alive! We believe our sins have been paid for! We believe that He deserves our praises and thanks. We believe that he is to be our object of attention and faith.

Unfortunately, Lutheran pastors are not the only people in the Lutheran Church that leave Jesus on the Cross and in the tomb. Many Lutherans live in the shadow of the cross or the darkness of the tomb. They are afraid that their sins are greater or that their faith is lacking, and because of that they live in a perpetual state of brokenness and sorrow for what they did to Christ. To all of us who live in guilt and shame for what we did to the Christ, the message the Angels gave to the women in Luke is especially ours, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Jesus is no longer dead, he lives. He paid for our sins with his life and now he lives again to give us new and perfect lives. I am not saying we should not be repentant for the sins we commit, but I am saying that our sins have been paid for. The death Jesus died is done, and with it so are our sins. They are covered. We are forgiven!

No matter who you are, what color your skin is or what heritage you may come from, your sins have been paid for by Christ’s death. But, remember he died willingly for you, no one could force him, nor could anything we have done keep him dead. And now he lives again, and by faith in

him you too will live. Christ is no longer dead and by faith you are no longer the person you once were.

So, the angels' message is for me, and for you all too. "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." So stop living in the darkness of the tomb. Stop looking to the things you have done. They are both dead things of the past. As Easter Christians, we look to the living and risen Christ for our life, for our faith, for our love and for everything that we need and want.

Look to our living Savior, because nothing you could do could keep him dead. Nothing your family might have done could keep him dead. Nothing your ancestors did could keep him dead. So don't look to those things for guilt or glory. That is living in the tomb; that is trying to leave Jesus on the cross; that is looking to something other than God for meaning or worth. Look to Christ who lives and reigns now in heaven and in your hearts, with the Father and the Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead. And, with resounding voices and lives proclaim the message of Easter: Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Pastor Curtis Jh

