

Victorious!

The Second Sunday in Easter

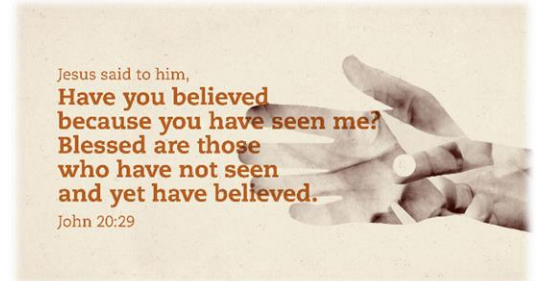
Greetings in the name of our Savior Jesus: I hope that your Easter celebration, though a little quieter than usual, was still filled with joy, the joy of Jesus' proclamation - "Because I live, you also will live." Life is ours through Jesus Christ our living Lord and Savior! What good news!

On the Monday morning after Easter my youngest daughter came down still wiping sleep out of her eyes she told me, "I wish we could have Easter again," She apparently enjoyed the Easter activities we did at home so much, she wanted to repeat it. I couldn't help but stop and tell her the good news, "Easter goes on forever. We get to live forever in heaven together with Jesus."

The theme as you worship: In 1 Peter 2 St. Peter tells us, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." With Easter and Jesus alive we have certainly tasted and seen that God is good to us, and we know there is so much more to come, there is an inheritance in heaven waiting for us. And even when we can't see all those blessings just yet, we go back to the thing that helps us tighten our grip on those promises, the words of God and Jesus' death and resurrection. God bless and strengthen your faith during worship today.

Announcements: There will be a live, online Bible Study at 11:15 AM EST this Sunday morning. If you haven't already, check it out, you can join in and just listen in or join the conversation. There has been a lot of positive feedback and I hope you will join us. Don't forget our Wednesday Bible Study as well, we are studying the gospel in Romans, it is not too late to join us.

If you missed the WELS Easter Worship Event, *Together at the Tomb!* Last Sunday evening, it is online as well, go to the WELS facebook page or website (wels.net) and listen to the message there.



INVOCATION & INVITATION TO WORSHIP

M: Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

EASTER DIALOGUE

Psalm 105

M: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

M: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;

C: make known among the nations what he has done.

M: sing to him, sing praise to him;

C: tell of all his wonderful acts.

M: Glory in his holy name;

- C: Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.**
- M: Look to the Lord and his strength;
- C: seek his face always.**
- M: Remember the wonders he has done,
- C: his miracles and the judgements he pronounced.**
- M: He remembers his covenant forever,
- C: the word he commanded for a thousand generations.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.
- C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
You should cast me away from your presence forever,
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**
- M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. By his death on the cross and his resurrection from grave, Christ gives this authority: If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven. Upon this your confession and by our living Lord's authority I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

SONG

Crown Him With Many Crowns

♪ **Crown him with many crowns, The Lamb upon his throne;
Hark how the heav'nly anthem drowns All music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing Of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King Through all eternity.**

**2 Crown him the Lord of love—Behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his wond'ring eye At mysteries so bright.**

**3 Crown him the Lord of life, Who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife For those he came to save.
His glories now we sing Who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring And lives that death may die.**

**4 Crown him the Lord of heav'n, Enthroned in worlds above;
Crown him the King to whom is giv'n The wondrous name of Love.
Crown him with many crowns As thrones before him fall;
Crown him, ye kings, with many crowns For he is King of all.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray.

O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

THE FIRST LESSON

Acts 10:34-36,39-43

Disciples of Jesus testify to the fact that Jesus is alive and in him is the forgiveness of sins

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross,⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

THE SECOND LESSON

1 Peter 1:3-9

Through faith in Jesus and connected to his death and resurrection...we have new birth into a living hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

SONG

Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

♪ **Christ has arisen, alleluia. Rejoice and praise him, alleluia.
For our Redeemer burst from the tomb, Even from death, dispelling its gloom.**

Refrain

**Let us sing praise to him with endless joy.
Death's fearful sting he has come to destroy.
Our sin forgiving, alleluia! Jesus is living, alleluia!**

**2 For three long days the grave did its worst Until its strength by God was dispersed.
He who gives life did death undergo. And in its conquest his might did show.**

Refrain

3 The angel said to them, “Do not fear. You look for Jesus who is not here. See for yourselves the tomb is all bare. Only the grave cloths are lying there.”

Refrain

4 “Go spread the news: he’s not in the grave. He has arisen this world to save. Jesus’ redeeming labors are done. Even the battle with sin is won.”

Refrain

5 Christ has arisen; he sets us free. Alleluia, to him praises be. Jesus is living! Let us all sing; He reigns triumphant, heavenly King.

Refrain

THE GOSPEL

John 20:19-31

The Gospel according to John, chapter 20.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” ²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe ^x that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

M: This is the gospel of the Lord.

THE MESSAGE

John 20:19-31

Theme: Victorious Over Skepticism!

Jesus' death and resurrection was meant to bring peace to the disciples. As they gathered in that room behind locked doors that first Easter Sunday evening, I can't imagine there was much peace. There was fear, doubt, despair, and skepticism. They had heard the stories told by the women and Peter and John. Jesus' body was not in the tomb, he had risen, just as he said. Some of them believed it, some did not. You can imagine the somewhat muted murmur in the room behind the locked door. In one part of the room, with a controlled excitement, the women are retelling their stories of Easter dawn - stone rolled away, the angel at the tomb, the good news. Over here Mary is telling the story of seeing Jesus with her own eye who she thought at first was the gardener at first. You have Peter and John telling the story of racing to the tomb, going into the tomb and finding the grave clothes. Jesus' death and resurrection were meant to give peace to the disciples, but now that room behind locked doors they were filled with fear and despair and some skepticism.

There was also the fear that maybe the Jewish leaders would look to get rid of them next. There was fear of what others might say about them. If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead there was the reality they would have to own up to the past and the futility of following Jesus. If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead they would be left to face the future ALONE! Maybe it wasn't on their mind at the moment, but if Jesus wasn't alive, they would eventually have to meet their maker, ALONE!

And after the events of that Easter morning, the empty tomb, Jesus reportedly alive? Without the conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead maybe there was even fear of Jesus? If it is true that he is alive, "What about our sins of denying him, of leaving his side in the garden of Gethsemane, abandoning our Lord and master when he needed him the most?" If Jesus was alive, what would Jesus say to them?

But then again, Jesus doesn't want his disciples filled with fear and doubt and despair. Jesus wants his disciples to have peace. And so he shows up. No knock on the door, no opening of the door, suddenly Jesus is just there. He gives new meaning to the assembly of believers, to his promise, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them." There Jesus is, standing among them. The disciples' heads turn, maybe they had to do a double take. It was actually Jesus. They were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

And his Words to them that first Sunday evening and the next Sunday evening? Three times Jesus says it. Did I mention it already, Jesus wants his disciples to be at peace.

"Peace be with you!" Peace was a standard Hebrew greeting, but when Jesus says it? When Jesus says it is it, the greeting is anything but standard. Jesus is peace sent from God for us. Peace in knowing that sins are forgiven, including their sins of denying Jesus, abandoning Jesus – it is all forgiven. They are reconciled with God, there is peace between God and them. There is power in that forgiveness to lift the fallen, to wipe away doubt and fear.

What is more, they weren't alone. Jesus would be with them, he would be with them as they went to carry out the important task he would give them, to announce on Christ's authority, Jesus died for you too! Jesus rose from the dead for you too, for you too there is peace and certainty. **"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."**²² **And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."**¹ They would need Jesus' power and presence, someone would have to declare that if the forgiveness of Jesus is rejected and thrown away the gift will be forfeited. They would certainly need the reminder of Jesus' peace and forgiveness for them, to carry out the task Jesus was giving them, to go to the world.

Note dear disciples of Jesus, the outward situation of the disciples would not change, there would still be danger, there was still the threat of the Jewish leaders coming after them, the reality of being imprisoned or worse. But over time, the peace of knowing their sins were forgiven, the joy of knowing Jesus was alive and they were not alone, drove them into the world. They held nothing back because Jesus withheld nothing from them. They had joy. It was just as Jesus had

¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Jn 20:21–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

predicted to them night before his death, **“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:22).**

There was one who missed the first evening. We know him well, “doubting Thomas.” We don’t know why he was absent, but he was. In missing the gathering of disciples he missed out something important. He missed out on the peace Jesus extended, the forgiveness he was giving, the giving of the Holy Spirit. He missed church so to speak. Without the peace of God being reiterated to the soul, without the Holy Spirit at work in God’s Word, faith is going to weaken and dry up.

The disciples tell Thomas what they saw and heard from Jesus, but he won’t believe it. His doubt seems to be teetering on the edge of blatant unbelief. Not far behind the crime of doubting, is the crime of unbelief, unbelief in God’s words and works. He demands more proof than has already been given through the Apostles’ testimony.

What more needed to be said. He had all the proof he needed in Jesus’ words and the testimony of the other apostles. But notice how Jesus deals with it. He doesn’t scold Thomas. He doesn’t reject Thomas. He patiently returns with words of peace, they are words of forgiveness. He doesn’t show up with a golden crown on his head, a halo of light surrounding him or angels dancing at his side to show how powerful he is. Jesus show up with his wounds, the nail marks, a spear pierced side. Those were wounds that were painful, they were the result of God punishing Jesus for sins of fear and doubt and even unbelief. They are glorious scars because by them sin is paid for, guilt is gone, and death is defeated! By his wounds humans are healed, God is our dear Father and not angry judge.

How merciful and loving and patient our God is. He gives all the proof the skeptic needs in his wounds, his scars, his giving everything. He shows all the proof we need in that he held nothing back.

Each of us has the moments of crippling doubt or worry or anxiety or fear? Who can say over the last few weeks, they haven’t had one moment of doubt or fear or anxiety strike? None of us I’d imagine. I suppose, if we didn’t have the conviction that Jesus is raised from the dead, then we would have every reason to fear in facing our past, our present and our future alone, we would face it alone. If Jesus is not raised from the dead then the voice of our conscience that condemns us and the verdict of the devil that he laughingly shouts in our ears, it is correct! There will be hell to pay for our sins. If Jesus is not raised from the dead, then this life and thoughts of the next life should reasonably fill us with anxiety. The devil and our sinful nature are constantly threatening to steal our peace from us, the peace Jesus gives to his disciples.

Then this terrible thing that is inside every human being begins to rise up and take over, the skeptical sinful nature rises up and begins to take control, “I’m not so sure I believe what God says.” It might go even this far, “I won’t believe it. And if God wants me to believe it he will have to give me proof.”

We hurt Jesus more than we know when we demand more than he has already given us. Though we know when we know of his love and forgiveness and peace and yet we fear the future. We hurt Jesus more than we know when, though we know his word, we doubt it because we look at him apart from his wounds, his hands, his side, his death and resurrection. What is his answer to us? Peace be with you...he brings us back to the essence of his Word – the cross, the resurrection. He will bring us back to the gathering of believers, he brings us back to the Word connected with the very body and blood he sacrificed for us. These last few weeks remind us we don’t ever want to take it for granted again. There at his table he doesn’t scold and reject us for our fears and doubts, but he we see his love for us...his love that is always connected to those rich wounds, wounds that make it abundantly clear he wants nothing but peace for us.

We look forward to gathering again soon and may we not pass over the words too quickly when we go to his table, “O Christ Lamb of God you take away the sin of the world, grant us your peace.”

He does, doesn’t he? When our faith feels like a candle about to be snuffed out, we go back to his Word. There he teaches us that our fears of viruses and fears of sin and death are all together unwarranted. Our fears of God’s judgement is all together unreasonable since Jesus has been raised from the dead.

And, as the disciples were strengthened by Jesus' peace that covered over their sins. As the Spirit was given to them to witness to Jesus' death and resurrection, we find strength for our work, he comes to us and equips us in his Word. Doesn't the events of this past few weeks and the despair you see in so many inspire you to want to help souls? I know it does me. We want them to be rejuvenated by the message of peace and joy that we have.

How will we persevere when it is rejected by so many and received by so few? The same way the disciples were rejuvenated. They gathered together and were strengthened in forgiveness of Jesus' wounds, the peace it brought them.

How will we continue on when our patience might even run thin? Then we go back to the mirror and we see our own weaknesses and how patient God is with us with our fear and doubts and anxieties. We look more and more deeply at Jesus' patience for us, that we might grow in patience. We demonstrate the patience and love of Jesus when we generously give to others the same peace and pardon he gave us.

I love the illustration given by a former professor of mine in his book. He illustrates what it is like for a Christian to live in fear vs. boldly trusting God's Word and promises. A man is trying to cross a river covered in 3 feet of ice, he gingerly walks out on all fours, trying to spread his weight as best he can. Suddenly he hears a rumbling around the river bend. It is a tractor pulling a hay wagon of happy screaming children right past him on the ice...as if three feet of ice is going to crack. The ice is God's love. There is no amount of our fear or worry or anxiety that will change God's love for us. See his wounds, his hands, his side. He held nothing back. We need not live with a faith mixed with fear or doubt like that man gingerly trying to cross the river. We live boldly in the peace and forgiveness of Jesus. Rejuvenated by his peace won for us we relay that peace and forgiveness to others – the wounds dear friend, they are for you, they are for the world! Amen.

APOSTLES CREED²

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING

"On the first day of the week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money" –II Corinthians 16:2. Out of thanks to God, we set aside a regular offering to the Lord.

Peace Lutheran offers a secure Give by Text option. To donate via text, send the dollar amount you wish to give, including a dollar sign, to 888-314-2975. Example: \$40. You will receive a secure registration link.

² Public confession of what we believe is faith's response to God's saving Word. Today we confess the Apostles' Creed.

THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

We give thanks to You, O Lord; we call upon Your name and sing praises to You for Your wonderful works. By Your great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Although we have not seen Him, we love Him. We believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible joy.

O Lord, we live in a scientific age, and we like to see tangible evidence to support what we believe. Lead us by Your Spirit to accept the truth of Your Son's resurrection from the dead. Help us never forget Christ's promise that, if we believe we will see greater things than Thomas saw. Lord, we believe, help us overcome any unbelief!

May the knowledge of Jesus' resurrection from the dead reassure us of our own resurrection so that we can face temporal death without fear. This we ask in the name of Jesus who suffered and died in our place and rose again from the dead for our justification.

We bring these and our private prayers to the one and only God...*Silent Prayer.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and ✝ give you peace.

C: Amen.

CLOSING SONG

How Firm a Foundation

♪ How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus hath fled.

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand."

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress."

April 19, 2020

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

Bible Study at 11:15 AM today, this Sunday.

Youth Confirmation Class Continues this Sunday evening, online at 5:29 PM. Youth Confirmands should have received a packet at their homes, if they didn't please contact me and we'll get you set up for class.