

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen, Indeed!

April 5, 2026

The Festival of Easter is the high point of our faith and worship life. The resurrection of Jesus proclaims victory over sin's most dreaded consequence - death.

Silent prayer in preparation for worship: O God, for my redemption you have given your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection you have delivered me from the power of the enemy. Therefore grant that all my sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day I may arise anew to live before you in righteousness and purity forever. Amen.

The Announcement *adapted from 2 Timothy 1:10 & Psalm 118*

- L** Christ is risen! Alleluia!
- C** **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**
- L** Christ has destroyed death. Alleluia!
- C** **And has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Alleluia!**

- L** The Lord is my strength and my song. Alleluia!
- C** **He has become my salvation. Alleluia!**
- L** I will not die, but live. Alleluia!
- C** **I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!**
- L** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
- C** **as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.**

- L** I will not die, but live. Alleluia!
- C** **I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!**
- L** Christ is risen! Alleluia!
- C** **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

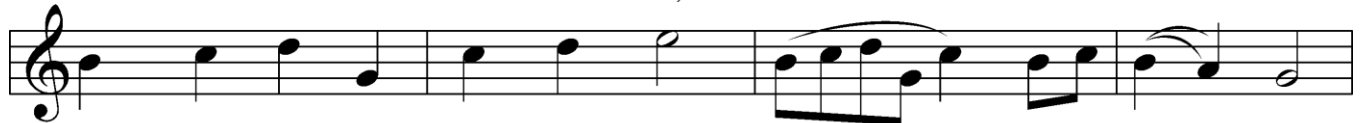
Lutheran Service Book 457, Lutheran Worship 127, The Lutheran Hymnal 199



1 Je - sus Christ is ris'n to - day, Al - le - lu - ia!
2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia!
3 But the pains which He en - dured, Al - le - lu - ia!
4 Sing we to our God a - bove, Al - le - lu - ia!



Our tri - um - phant ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!
Un - to Christ, our heav'n - ly king, Al - le - lu - ia!
Our sal - va - tion have pro - cured; Al - le - lu - ia!
Praise e - ter - nal as His love; Al - le - lu - ia!



Who did once up - on the cross, Al - le - lu - ia!
Who en - dured the cross and grave, Al - le - lu - ia!
Now a - bove the sky He's king, Al - le - lu - ia!
Praise Him, all ye heav'n - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!



Suf - fer to re - deem our loss. Al - le - lu - ia!
Sin - ners to re - deem and save. Al - le - lu - ia!
Where the an - gels ev - er sing. Al - le - lu - ia!
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. Al - le - lu - ia!

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L O Lord, open my lips,

C and my mouth will declare your praise.

L Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

C make haste to help me, O Lord.

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive me my sins, and lead me to everlasting life. Amen.

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Introit Exodus. 15:2a, 6, 13, 17–18; antiphon: Exodus. 15:1b

- L** I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
- C** **The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;**
- L** Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power,
your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.
- C** **You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.**
- L** You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode,
- C** **the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.
The Lord will reign forever and ever.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**
- L** I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** **Have mercy on us.**
- L** O Christ, **C** **Have mercy on us.**
- L** O Lord, **C** **Have mercy on us.**

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Almighty God the Father, through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ you have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Acts 10:34–43

³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷you yourselves know what happened

throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Gradual adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews. 2:7; Psalm. 8:6

- L** Christ has risen from the dead.
- C** God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,
- L** He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
- C** He has put all things under his feet.

Psalm 16

- L** ¹Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- C** ²I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”
- L** ³As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.
- C** ⁴The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.
- L** ⁵The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
- C** ⁶The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
- L** ⁷I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.
- C** ⁸I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- L** ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.
- C** ¹⁰For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.
- L** ¹¹You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy;
- C** At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Colossians 3:1–4

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day 2 Timothy 1:10b

- L** Alleluia , Alleluia. Christ Jesus abolished death. Alleluia
- C** And brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Alleluia.

Matthew 28:1–10

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 28th chapter.

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

The Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.
From thence 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**

Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

Lutheran Service Book 490, Lutheran Worship 139, The Lutheran Hymnal 201



1 Je - sus lives! The vic - t'ry's won! Death no long - er can ap -
2 Je - sus lives! To Him the throne High a - bove all things is
3 Je - sus lives! For me He died, Hence will I, to Je - sus
4 Je - sus lives! I know full well Noth - ing me from Him shall



pall me; Je - sus lives! Death's reign is done!
giv - en. I shall go where He is gone,
liv - ing, Pure in heart and act a - bide,
sev - er. Nei - ther death nor pow'rs of hell



From the grave will Christ re - call me. Bright - er
Live and reign with Him in heav - en. God is
Praise to Him and glo - ry giv - ing. All I
Part me now from Christ for - ev - er. God will



scenes will then com - mence; This shall be my con - fi - dence.
faith - ful; doubt - ings, hence! This shall be my con - fi - dence.
need God will dis - pense; This shall be my con - fi - dence.
be my sure de - fense; This shall be my con - fi - dence.

Jesus lives! And now is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm my trembling breath
When I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:
Jesus is my confidence!

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Devotional thoughts:

What were you doing at 5:30 this morning? Why would anyone get up that early? Most of the time, when I open my eyes and look at the clock at 5:30 a.m., I roll over, close my eyes, and go back to sleep.

I know some people are early risers by nature. Others have a work schedule that requires an early morning.

I heard a story a few years ago about a young woman who was a notoriously late riser. I'm sure that you know people like that. They joyfully jump out of bed at the crack of noon otherwise they could be a little grumpy in the morning. However, on one particular morning, this young woman jumped out of bed while it was still dark. She was as bubbly as could be with a smile on her face. What would cause such a sudden change in her personality? It was her first morning at Disney World!

I began by mentioning 5:30 in the morning because sunrise in Jerusalem on the first Easter was about 5:30 a.m. Matthew tells us that the women went to Jesus' tomb at dawn. Do you think that they jumped out of bed that morning as bubbly as could be with smiles on their faces? I have my doubts.

Some conversations stick in your mind for years and years. When I was a teenager, my dad and I were having a discussion. Somewhere along the way, I commented that a certain activity was not going to be fun. My dad said, "Not everything has to be fun." For some reason, that short statement has stayed with me all these years. I'm not sure that I agreed with him at the time. But I've come to realize that Dad knew what he was saying.

He served his country during the Korean War and was involved in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. It wasn't fun.

He was up before dawn every day to get ready for work. He worked 55 hours a week until the day he retired in order to put food on our table and a roof over our heads. He didn't do that for fun.

I could continue but this is enough to illustrate what he meant when he said, "Not everything has to be fun." Sometimes we do difficult and unpleasant things to fulfill our obligations or out of devotion to the people that we love.

Pause for a moment and place yourself in the shoes of those women who got up so early that first Easter morning. Mark and Luke tell us that they were taking spices to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. I doubt that they

were doing it for fun. Out of a deep and heartfelt devotion to Jesus, they willingly went to fulfill an obligation of love for Him. Little did they know that their faithful commitment to serve Jesus in His death would allow them to be the very first witnesses to the most spectacular event in all of history.

Mark tells us that on their way to the tomb, they had a conversation that must have stuck in their minds for the rest of their lives. All these years later, we know what they said. They asked each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” (Mark 16:3).

God was already aware of their concern. He sent an angel from heaven to roll back that stone.

The Bible doesn’t identify this angel but it is interesting to speculate about him. Was it Gabriel who appeared to Zechariah to tell him that his wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son (Luke 1:19) and who told Mary that she would conceive and bear a son? (Luke 1:26). Since he is not named, I personally don’t think that he is Gabriel.

Could it be the same angel of the Lord that appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him that Mary would bear a son, and He should give Him the name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins? (Matthew 1:20-21). Was this the same angel of the Lord that appeared to the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night saying to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:8-11) Could this be one of the angel choir that sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:14 KJV).

Whoever this angel was, he was given the most wonderful message ever delivered to humanity. These early rising women were privileged to be the first to hear: “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.”

With wings on their feet, they flew out of the tomb. Their hearts were pounding with fear and unimaginably great joy as they ran to tell Jesus’ disciples that magnificent message. But on the way, wonder of wonders, they met Jesus!

That early morning trip to an empty tomb on the first Easter changed those women. They could not contain themselves. They had to share the message of the angel, “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.” That message changed history.

First, it changed Jesus’ disciples. They were changed from trembling in fear behind locked doors to telling the high priest, “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

The message of the angel changed the Apostle Paul so that he was compelled to write:

“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. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

The message of the angel to the women at the empty tomb has changed countless generations and now it has changed us. We shall not die, but we shall live (Psalm 118:17).

Now it is time for us to rush from the empty tomb with the message of the angel. “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.” Who will you tell? Who is it that God has chosen for you to be an Easter angel with the message of life and salvation?

I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living head.

He lives to silence all my fears;
He lives to wipe away my tears;

He lives to calm my troubled heart;
He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Lutheran Service Book 457, Lutheran Worship 127, The Lutheran Hymnal 199



1 Je - sus Christ is ris'n to - day, Al - le - lu - ia!
2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia!
3 But the pains which He en - dured, Al - le - lu - ia!
4 Sing we to our God a - bove, Al - le - lu - ia!



Our tri - um - phant ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!
Un - to Christ, our heav'n - ly king, Al - le - lu - ia!
Our sal - va - tion have pro - cured; Al - le - lu - ia!
Praise e - ter - nal as His love; Al - le - lu - ia!



Who did once up - on the cross, Al - le - lu - ia!
Who en - dured the cross and grave, Al - le - lu - ia!
Now a - bove the sky He's king, Al - le - lu - ia!
Praise Him, all ye heav'n - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!



Suf - fer to re - deem our loss. Al - le - lu - ia!
Sin - ners to re - deem and save. Al - le - lu - ia!
Where the an - gels ev - er sing. Al - le - lu - ia!
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. Al - le - lu - ia!

Prayers

L On this holy day of the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord we rejoice at the perfect healing of body and soul that awaits us in our resurrection and in the life of the world to come. In our present distress we pray that in Your way, in Your time, and according to Your will that you would give healing and strength to those who are sick, protect those who care for them, and grant us steady minds and calm hearts in the face of fear. Comfort and protect those we hold dear in our hearts and especially those who are far from us. Keep us in this faith and embolden us in love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Comfort those who mourn with the truth of Christ's empty tomb, that in the midst of their grief they may abide in the hope of His resurrection. Uphold them in faith as they await the day when You will wipe every tear from all faces.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, as the women returned from the empty tomb to proclaim the resurrection, so open the mouths of Your people to declare the message of salvation to all who will hear.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, grant that corrupt words and sinful actions would never turn our "hosannas" into shouts of "crucify Him." When we stumble and fall into evil ways, grant us repentance and forgiveness,

C Amen.

L Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that hostilities with Iran would quickly end.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, give us joy in Your Son's great victory over sin, death, and the devil. By faith and forgiveness give us strength to live the new life granted to us in holy Baptism that we may be glad and rejoice in the salvation He has won for us.

C Amen.

L We praise You, O Lord, for all Your servants who have departed this life in faith. We pray that You will give us confidence to await with joy the day when join us with them in the resurrection.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Lutheran Service Book 461, Lutheran Worship 264, The Lutheran Hymnal 200



1 I know that my Re - deem - er lives; What com-fort
 2 He lives tri - um - phant from the grave; He lives e -
 3 He lives to bless me with His love; He lives to
 4 He lives to grant me rich sup - ply; He lives to



this sweet sen - tence gives! He lives, He lives, who
 ter - nal - ly to save; He lives all - glo - rious
 plead for me a - bove; He lives my hun - gry
 guide me with His eye; He lives to com - fort



once was dead; He lives, my ev - er - liv - ing head.
 in the sky; He lives ex - alt - ed there on high.
 soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.
 me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's com - plaint.

5 He lives to silence all my fears;
 He lives to wipe away my tears;
 He lives to calm my troubled heart;
 He lives all blessings to impart.

6 He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;
 He lives and loves me to the end;
 He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
 He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

7 He lives and grants me daily breath;
 He lives, and I shall conquer death;
 He lives my mansion to prepare;
 He lives to bring me safely there.

8 He lives, all glory to His name!
 He lives, my Jesus, still the same;
 Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
 I know that my Redeemer lives!

Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of Easter April 6—11, 2026

Introduction

Most modern forms of meditation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Easter Monday

Early in my ministry church workers who grew up in the first half of the twentieth century would ask if I had ever gone to church on Easter Monday. I was surprised to learn that there was a time when Lutherans would gather in church to worship on Easter Monday.

Examining The Lutheran Hymnal, I learned that lessons and propers were appointed for Easter Monday and Easter Tuesday. Lutheran Worship does not have propers for Easter week. What about Lutheran Service Book? It contains lessons and propers for Easter Tuesday and Easter Wednesday.

Now I was curious! I discovered that in the Eastern Orthodox Church the week following Easter (which for them is April 12 this year) is Bright Week with special services and lessons each day of the week. Bright Week refers to the light Jesus brought into the world. During Bright Week, fasting is strictly forbidden! Each service in Bright Week is really a continuation of the Festival of the Resurrection. In the Ukrainian Catholic Church Bright Week services are the most heavily attended liturgies of the year. On Easter Monday (Bright Monday) there is a special remembrance of baptism when we were connected to Jesus' death and resurrection.

In services throughout the week the people are greeted with "Christ is risen!" and they respond "He is risen indeed!" (Modern Lutherans sometimes add "Alleluia" to this greeting which we have adopted from them.)

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 1

Awake, my heart, with gladness,
See what today is done;
Now, after gloom and sadness,
Comes forth the glorious sun.
My Savior there was laid
Where our bed must be made
When to the realms of light
Our spirit wings its flight.

L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

C O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

C make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

Luke 24:13-35

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

How appropriate for us to read about two disciples encountering Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Like so many of us, they are having an academic discussion about Jesus and the things that happened surrounding His death and empty tomb. Their hearts were not yet touched by the resurrection.

They considered Jesus to be a prophet who was mighty in word and deed. They knew that He was unjustly condemned and executed by the religious and civil authorities. But for them, that’s the end of the story. Their dreams for a restored nation of Israel were dashed upon the mount of Calvary. Golgotha brought their Palm Sunday ambitions to an end.

They heard the report of an empty tomb, of angels, and the message that Jesus was alive. But their hearts were empty. They foolishly discounted what the women said.

We are also often slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Americans are quick to believe every rumor on the internet or every television pundit, but we are slow to believe the word of God!

Yet it is the Scriptures where we find reality and truth and they point to Jesus as the savior!

In the generation before me at the seminary, I was told that students were required to use the Old Testament to show God's plan of salvation in Christ. They were to do this three times, once from the Five Books of Moses, once from the Psalms, and once from the Prophets! If you would like to try this exercise, you might want to start with Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit worked on the hearts of these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their eyes were opened. They recognized the resurrected Jesus and believed in Him.

May the Holy Spirit use Holy Scriptures to open our eyes to see our resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and trust in Him for our salvation.

Prayer: Almighty God, through the resurrection of Your Son, You grant eternal life to us and all believers. We pray that the Holy Spirit would touch our hearts and the hearts of our unbelieving friends that they may share with us in the joy of Easter, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. During this time of national and personal distress, grant to us the peace of God that surpasses all understanding through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Easter Tuesday

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 2

The foe in triumph shouted
When Christ lay in the tomb;
But lo, he now is routed,
His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free;
In glorious victory
He who is strong to save
Has triumphed o'er the grave.

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L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

C O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

C make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

Introit Exodus. 15:2a, 6, 13, 17–18; antiphon: Exodus. 15:1b

L I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

C The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;

L Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power,
your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.

C You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

L You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode,

C the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

The Lord will reign forever and ever.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

L I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Luke 24:36–49

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “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.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

How is your memory? Mine is good. It’s just short.

That’s a joke I learned long ago. Unfortunately, it is becoming more true each day.

If you know me, you know that I am never at a lack for words. I’ve always got something to say but maybe not everything I say is worth saying.

When I prepare a sermon, I always want what I say to be something worth saying. I want it to be what God wants me to say. Sermons are not a time for rambling. They are a time for talking about Jesus.

When I prepare a sermon, sometimes I do seem to be at a loss for words. I’m not sure what direction to go with the text that is in front of me. This is when I remember sage advice from a seminary professor (whose name escapes me, ha, ha.) He said when the sermon well is dry, do a word study. That advice has served me well for almost 49 years.

Early in my ministry, I did a study on the word “peace.” This is the first word that Jesus says to His gathered disciples on the first Easter evening. “Peace to you!”

When most people read the word peace they think of the definitions usually given, “tranquility” or “harmony.” But an in-depth study of how the word is used in the Bible reveals so much more. The ten-volume Theological Dictionary of the New Testament edited by Gerhard Kittel has an extensive article on the Greek word “peace.”

There I discovered that when “peace” is used as a greeting, it is a desire that you would receive all the blessings that come from living in the time when God reigns. It is the time when a lamb and lion lie down together. It is a time when salvation is fully realized.

The peace that Jesus uses to greet the disciples is the peace that He won for us on the cross. It is “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

Prayer: Almighty God, through the resurrection of Your Son You have secured peace for our troubled consciences. Through all the uncertainties of life, keep us from anxiety and worry. Grant us this peace evermore that trusting in the merit of Your Son we may come at last to the perfect peace of heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Easter Wednesday

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 3

This is a sight that gladdens—
What peace it doth impart!
Now nothing ever saddens
The joy within my heart.
No gloom shall ever shake,
No foe shall ever take
The hope which God's own Son
In love for me has won.

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L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

C O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

C make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

Psalm 61

L ¹Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer;

C ²from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,

L ³for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

C ⁴Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!

L ⁵For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

C ⁶Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations!

L ⁷May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

C ⁸So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I perform my vows day after day.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

John 21:1–14

¹After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the

net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

This account of Jesus, Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other disciples fishing is one that takes on a new perspective for me after visiting Israel. Of course, the Bible doesn't report exactly where this happened but Bible scholars have been able to make a fairly good estimate of its location.

Just about a mile and a half down the shore from Capernaum is a place called Tabigha. Here a number of warm springs enter the Sea of Galilee and make it a favorite fishing spot. Near there you will find a very large rock on the shore. If you pause for a moment you can imagine Jesus standing on that rock and shouting to the fishermen.

One of my favorite fishing spots (like any other fisherman, I won't tell you exactly where) is a drop-off 100 yards offshore. I have spent many hours fishing there. It's not unusual for someone from my family to come down to the shore and yell, “Did you catch anything?” And so they recreate the scene describing Jesus in John 21:5.

No, they had toiled all night without catching any fish. At Jesus' directing, they cast their net to the right side of the boat and catch such a great quantity of fish that they are unable to haul it in! John realized that this had happened before and tells Peter, “It is the Lord!” Without hesitation, Peter swam to see Jesus.

There are so many times we go about our daily lives unmindful of Jesus' presence. We toil and struggle without much success. Yet even in these times, Jesus has not forgotten us. He reveals himself to us in word and sacrament.

He does more than nourish our bodies with bread and fish. He nourishes our souls with the refreshments of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Prayer: Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Grant that we, who have been raised with Him, may abide in His presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; let us never become dismayed with the uncertain details of life here on earth through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Easter Thursday

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 4

Now hell, its prince, the devil,
Of all their pow'r are shorn;
Now I am safe from evil,
And sin I laugh to scorn.
Grim death with all its might
Cannot my soul affright;
It is a pow'rless form,
Howe'er it rave and storm.

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L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

C O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

- L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,
C **make known his deeds among the peoples!**

(Psalm 105:1)

Psalm 118:14-17

- L** ¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.
C ¹⁵ **Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous:**
“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly,
L ¹⁶ the right hand of the Lord exalts, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!”
C ¹⁷ **I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.**
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

John 3:1-15

^{3:1} Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

On Easter Thursday or Bright Thursday, John 3:1-15 is read every year in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. This familiar account of Nicodemus coming at night to Jesus is particularly appropriate for Easter week. It reminds us of the connection between baptism and the resurrection.

You may recall that baptism is strongly connected to Lent and our need for repentance. Luther rightly reminds us that repentance is simply returning to our baptism every day!

We read in Luther's Small Catechism:

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)

Easter also reminds us of the second part of baptism, the daily rising to new life. In fact, Easter is a special time for us to remember the connection between baptism and eternal life which we also find in the Small Catechism.

What benefits does Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

Jesus rescued us from death and the devil on the cross and gives us eternal salvation through faith. The Holy Spirit works this faith in us through word and sacrament. The connection between our salvation and baptism is so strong that the Apostle Peter writes, “Baptism doth also now save us” and he goes on to say, “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21 KJV).

In fact, the connection between Easter and baptism is found in the very shape of most baptismal fonts. Have you ever counted the sides? Throughout history, you will discover that baptismal fonts have eight sides to remind us of the resurrection and new life. Because of this connection between baptism and the resurrection Eastern Orthodox Churches are built in the shape of a baptismal font, having eight sides.

Why the number eight? Jesus rose from the dead on the eighth day! On that day God began His New Creation! Wait a minute. Didn't Jesus rise from the dead on the first day? Indeed He did. But another way to think of Easter is the eighth day because it is the day following the seventh day Sabbath when Jesus was in the tomb. (You also may have remembered that there were eight people in Noah's family who were saved at the time of the flood.)

From the time of Jesus until now, Christians are gathered into the family of God and become partakers of the resurrection through baptism. Some like Nicodemus may ask, “How can these things be?” However, we recognize that just as God is able to bring the dead to life, the Holy Spirit is able to bring unbelievers to faith.

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

Prayer: Almighty God, You protected Noah and his family in the ark. You led Your people out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea. At His baptism in the Jordan River, You declared our Lord Jesus to be Your beloved Son. In the waters of baptism, You washed away our sin. Let us always rejoice that you have made us your baptized children, part of your family, for all eternity; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Easter Friday

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 5

The world against me rages,
Its fury I disdain;
Though bitter war it wages,
Its work is all in vain.
My heart from care is free,
No trouble troubles me.
Misfortune now is play,
And night is bright as day.

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L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

- L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!
- C** **O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia!** (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)
- L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,
- C** **make known his deeds among the peoples!** (Psalm 105:1)

Luke 1:46-55 Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

- L** “My soul magnifies the Lord,
- C** **and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**
- L** for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
- C** **for he who is mighty has done great things for me,**
and holy is his name.
- L** And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
- C** **He has shown strength with his arm;**
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
- L** he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
- C** **he has filled the hungry with good things,**
and the rich he has sent away empty.
- L** He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
- C** **as he spoke to our fathers,**
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

John 19:25b-27

²⁵ Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

We all remember Mary at Christmas. We think of her visit from the angel Gabriel. We remember her time with Elizabeth who was soon to give birth to John the Baptist. We imagine the rigors of her trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem and then the flight into Egypt. Our hearts go out to this young woman who must place her newborn baby in a manger because there was no room for her in the inn. We think of her amazement at the arrival of shepherds and wise men. We contemplate her wonder at the words of Simeon and Anna. We resonate with her astonishment at hearing her twelve-year-old eloquently answering difficult questions in the temple.

During the frenzied activity surrounding Jesus’ passion, we think of Judas, Caiaphas, and Pilate. We remember Peter and his sword, Malchus, the servant girl, and the rooster crowing. We see Herod looking for miracles and Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus’ cross. We learn of the viciousness of Roman soldiers, who whip, mock, and fashion a crown of thorns. We stand in awe at the love and compassion, bravery, and nerve of Joseph of Arimathea who went to Pilate to claim Jesus’ body and properly prepare it for burial in his own new tomb.

In the middle of all this activity, among the women at the cross, we once again briefly see Mary. Christians through the centuries have imagined the agony that she must have felt at the sight of Jesus on the cross. Gone were the adoring multitudes. She heard no words of praise for her son, only mockery and disdain.

Jesus in His love and compassion for His mother provides for her future care by designating John to take His place as her son, guardian, and protector. According to church history, John was faithful to that assignment.

But on this Easter Friday, I want you to think of another event not recorded in Scripture. I want you to pause and briefly imagine the wonder, amazement, delight, and joy Mary must have experienced on that first

Easter as she learned of her son's resurrection. As hard as it is for us to picture her pain at the cross, it is even more incredible to envision her delight at the resurrection.

The last time Mary is mentioned in the Bible is in Acts chapter 1 after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Her life would never be the same. Her son had accomplished His task. He had paid for the sins of the world and redeemed all of us from death and the devil. She could live the remainder of her life with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

This Easter Friday is not like Good Friday. Easter Friday is a day of joy. Easter Friday is a day of celebration. Easter Friday is a day to join with Mary and all the witnesses of the resurrection to rejoice in the gift of eternal life from God our Savior.

Prayer: Almighty God, You provided your Son with an earthly mother and family. We thank you for the families in which you have placed us. We pray today that you would shower your blessings upon our families and loved ones and grant to us the joy of knowing that we will one day join in the resurrection with our brother Jesus and all our brothers and sisters in Christ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Easter Saturday

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness – 6, 7

Now I will cling forever
To Christ, my Savior true;
My Lord will leave me never,
Whate'er He passes through.
He rends death's iron chain;
He breaks through sin and pain;
He shatters hell's grim thrall;
I follow Him through all.

He brings me to the portal
That leads to bliss untold,
Whereon this rhyme immortal
Is found in script of gold:
"Who there My cross has shared
Finds here a crown prepared;
Who there with Me has died
Shall here be glorified."

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L Christ is Risen!

C His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

C O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

C make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

Psalm 92:1-5

L ^{92:1} It is good to give thanks to the Lord,

C to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

L ² to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,

C ³ to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.

L ⁴ For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

C ⁵ How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Matthew 28:1-10

^{28:1} Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

On the seventh day of creation, God rested. In order to commemorate this day, God commanded the people of the Old Testament to do no work but to rest on the seventh day. Over time, rabbis developed strict rules regarding what constituted work and therefore what was prohibited on the Sabbath. One day Jesus and His disciples were walking along a path. Grain was hanging over the path and his disciples were eating it (Matthew 12:1-8). When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” According to their interpretation of the Sabbath law even casually picking grain and eating it as you walked along was considered work.

To this day you will discover surprising Sabbath regulations. In Israel, our hotel had a “Sabbath elevator.” On Saturday this elevator automatically stopped at every floor and opened the door continuously throughout the day. Why? So no one would have to push a button on the Sabbath.

In the dining room of our hotel, olives were served at every meal. But the only day that pitted olives were served was Saturday. Even removing the pit from an olive was deemed to be work by their Sabbath interpretation.

For us Christians, who live in the light of the New Testament, things are different. We no longer are required to observe the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament. Why? Because Jesus is our Sabbath rest!

The Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

All the Old Testament ceremonial regulations have come to an end because they were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer must follow the Old Testament dietary restrictions. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer need to sacrifice lambs or turtle doves. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ, the perfect sacrifice. We no longer observe Old Testament religious festivals. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer must worship on Saturday and follow the Old Testament Sabbath laws. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ.

Sabbath means rest. Jesus is our true and complete rest.

The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the victor's triumph won;
Now be the song of praise begun.
Alleluia!

On that first Saturday following Jesus' resurrection, it was the first time that God's people could enjoy true rest on a Sabbath. Jesus had come and completely fulfilled for us all the requirements of the law. We now may really rest from our labors.

Unfortunately, some Christians continue to allow themselves to be bound by the Old Testament ceremonial laws. Pray that they will one day see Jesus as He truly is, our Sabbath rest. Our Sunday worship reflects this wonderful rest that comes to us in Jesus' resurrection from the dead on that first Easter Sunday. We rejoice that because of His victory we will one day rest in peace in His loving arms for all eternity.

Prayer: Almighty God, You sent your only-begotten Son into the world to fulfill for us all the requirements of Your holy law. We thank and praise You that every day we can enjoy our Sabbath rest because Jesus is our Savior and grants us His peace. Comfort us with this peace during these times of uncertainty and trials of physical isolation and distress; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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