

Easter Sunday - April 12, 2020

Hymn "Christ Is Risen, Sing Alleluia"

Opening Address: Amos peers into the future and sees a rebuilt Davidic dynasty. Isaiah, in like manner, speaks about a shoot from Jesse's stump (Isaiah 11:1), while Jeremiah sees a new David who is "a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:6). Micah envisions a new David coming from Bethlehem who will "be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2), and Ezekiel declares that in the coming age the Lord will set over His people "one shepherd, my servant David" (Ezekiel 34:23; cf. 37:24–25). These promises and predictions come to fruition when Jesus, who is from the house and lineage of David (e.g., Luke 2:4), rose again from the dead and conquered sin and the grave, for us!

The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day: Let us pray: Almighty God and 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.

The Old Testament Reading is written in the book of Amos, chapter 9, verses 11 to 15. "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and

eat their fruit. I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the LORD your God.

The Epistle Reading is from St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 1 to 11
Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For 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. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew, chapter 28, verses 1 to 10.
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. 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “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, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Apostles' Creed: 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

Hymn 461 "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" v. 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8

1 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.

2 He lives triumphant from the grave;
He lives eternally to save;
He lives all-glorious in the sky;
He lives exalted there on high.

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.

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!
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The Sermon: Come to the Feast

Christ IS Risen....

“The party’s over!” What does this mean? In reality, it can mean a lot of things! “The party’s over” can mean, “It’s 2:00 a.m. and I’ve got to go to work in six hours. Besides, everyone is leaving, and you are out of snacks and drinks.” Or it can mean, “It’s all over, the Fat Lady has sung, the curtain has gone down, Mighty Casey has struck out, and we are all in quarantine!”

It is this second sense of “The party’s over!” that coincides with the context of Amos 9:11–15, namely, God’s judgment of the temple in the prophet’s fifth and final vision. Hear the word of the LORD from Amos 9:1, “**I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, ‘Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake.’**” Make no mistake about it; the party is over!

And yet, after the judgment, God states, “**In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old.**” Judgment will give way to mercy, and death will give way to resurrection. God promises to raise up the fallen tabernacle of David!

On this day we celebrate that He has done just that! There is nothing dead about Jesus. John 1:4, “**In Him was *life*, and that *life* was the light of men.**” John 6:35, “**I am the bread of *life*.**” John 6:68, “**You have the words of eternal *life*.**” John 10:10, “**I have come that they may have *life*.**” John 11:25, “**I am the resurrection and the *life*.**” John 14:6, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the *life*.**” Climactically Paul throws a triumphant fist up in the air and shouts, “**Death has been swallowed up in victory**” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Far from being over, this celebration has just begun. Just because we are separated and quarantined, it doesn’t mean the party is over. Rather, it has just begun, and Jesus of Nazareth is the life of this party. He’s not some fable or fairy tale that we’ve made up inside our head; He’s God and Son, and He’s risen from the dead!

But every celebration brings with it some questions. The first one is, who is invited?

Amos maintains that all are invited. He writes, **“So that they will possess the remnant of Edom”** (Amos 9:12). The prophet uses a pun to make his point. “Edom” sounds a lot like “Adam.” In fact, in Hebrew, both words have the same consonants—only the vowels are different. “Edom” reminds us of “Adam” and “Adam” denotes not only the first man but can also, in some texts, mean all humanity. Confirming this understanding is the next part of verse 12 where God defines it for us, **“All the nations over whom My name is called.”** Edom, therefore, is a cipher for Adam. Everyone descended from Adam is invited. This feast is for you and me!

John Carlson is a Lutheran pastor in Minnesota. A few years ago he noticed that in his town on the night of the Senior Prom only the posh, preppy, powerful, polished, and popular kids went to the party. So he came up with an idea of holding a celebration for kids who couldn’t get a date. This prom was for them. Now Timex gives out watches to the kids who attend, other companies have joined in, and it’s more popular than the real prom! Carlson calls it the Reject Prom.

Have you been rejected lately? Told you don’t belong? Feeling second rate? Do you know about partner rejection? Peer rejection? Parental rejection? Do you know about deep running personal rejection? All are invited.

The next question is, what about party gifts? God says, “No gifts, please.” For this celebration we can bring nothing, and God means it. He does it all! Hear this promise in Luke 14:17, **“At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’”** In Amos 9:13 the prophet confirms that everything is ready for us. He writes that in the days to come the grain harvest will be so plentiful that the “one plowing” will be in the field with the “one reaping,” as if spring followed autumn and there was no winter. In like manner, the “one treading grapes” will be performing his work while the planting happens, as if there was no autumn. There will be double production in half the time. God provides it all, and this in great abundance!

But if this costs us nothing, it cost Jesus everything. The Savior’s lips were cracked and swollen. Blood and spit were caked to His cheeks. Tight nerves threatened to snap as death sang its morbid melody. But on the other side of Good Friday, Jesus lives to give His gifts of life, salvation, and grace at His Supper, in baptism, and the Word. And what awesome gifts!

The next question is this: what about my appearance? And the answer is life changing: “Come as you are.” But you say, “My face bears the marks of worry. My shoulders are stooped from burdens. My lips are dirty from slander. My heart is hardened toward my spouse and children. My fingers are stuck accusing my brother. My arteries are clogged with bitterness and resentment.” Amos 1:2–9:10 is intended to burn and bury the world of power politics and phony religion as these were known in Amos’s day. The prophet knows all about messed up government, religion, businesses, and lives. Yet he still says, “Come as you are.” Unfortunately, sin really messes that up! It shows up everywhere, messing up relationships, ruining lives, and breaking hearts by words and actions.

Despite it all, God promises to restore exiled and unworthy people. He says, “Come as you are! **I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel.**” The phrase “restore the fortunes” has everything to do with changing people’s destiny. God reverses the curse. Those in the dark now live in the light. Those long lost are now found. The blind see, and the dead are raised!

So God says, “Come as you are!” The Father tells his servants in Luke 15:22–23: **“Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Let’s have a**

feast and celebrate!” Our God provides the proper attire for all prodigal sons and daughters: Easter baptismal robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

Our last question is this: when will the celebration end? Through Amos the Lord maintains that this feast will never come to an end. **“I will plant them, and they will never again be uprooted.”** This new life in the Promised Land was initially fulfilled by the remnant who returned from Babylonian captivity led by Sheshbazzar and David’s descendant Zerubbabel. Now, those who are “in Christ” possess these promises because we have a land inheritance that can “never perish, spoil, or fade,” which is the new heavens and the new earth. While we wait for the Savior to be revealed in His second advent, Jesus promises that we will never be plucked from His hand. At His second coming all believers will inherit this kingdom and will reign with Him forever in the heavenly promised land. And there we will celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb, which will have no end!

What does this give, joy! Experience the resurrection message this Easter. Hear it like a boy named Elijah. Elijah was a boy that my little brother Zack befriended in Middle School, and how they met was a cool story. He one day saw some kids picking on him, and stopped those kids, and sent them away. Unfortunately for Elijah, that happened a lot. As a baby, he had a brain tumor that they had to remove shortly after his birth. They were able to remove it, but sadly, at a cost. It left part of his face paralyzed and left him with some permanent learning disabilities. And, as you could imagine, he was picked on because of that. Once my brother shoed those kids away, they became good friends and he was picked on less. He then invited him to church, and to an event called Kids Night Out (which my aunt and uncle helped to organize), which was where parents dropped their kids off at church for a night out on their own. I vividly remember that event.

Elijah would often go downstairs with the preschoolers, where I would help out. At some point, we would do a Bible Story with the kids. That evening, though, we did the Passion story. As Mrs. Hoffman read the story, we quickly found out that he never heard it before. When we got to the part about Good Friday, he was shocked. I remember him blurting out, “What do you mean they killed him? Why did they do that? He didn’t deserve that!” And knowing the ending, we went along with it and said, “Yeah, that is sad, isn’t it?” And then Mrs. Hoffman read about Easter morning and the empty tomb. As he heard it, something clicked. With a smile, he said, “You mean He *didn’t* stay dead? He is alive?” We said, “Yes, He didn’t stay dead, but is living!” Almost shaking the pre-schooler next to him, he shouted, “Woohoo! He didn’t stay dead! Did you hear that! He is alive!” It was such an experience to see such joy at the story. I hope you have that same joy this morning and season. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Experience the joy that comes from His victory over death and the grave. Experience the joy that comes from forgiveness and salvation won. Experience the joy that will not end, even though we cannot experience it here together, today. Experience His resurrection joy amidst your fears, sadness, pain, hurt, anxiety, and stresses.

Enjoy the heavenly celebration. All are invited. Don’t worry about a gift. Come as you are. Enjoy the unending celebration. Since He didn’t stay dead, the party won’t ever end....Christ is Risen! He has risen indeed, Alleluia! The Party isn’t over, it has just begun.

Prayer of the Church

Rejoicing in the resurrection of our Lord and sharing in His peace, let us pray to the Lord on behalf of ourselves and all people as they have need.

Brief silence

O risen Savior, set free our tongues to confess Your resurrection before a world still captive to sin and death. Give us courage to go to every place and to speak in every language the salvation won for us upon the cross and the hope granted to us of life that death cannot overcome. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, make us to burn with the fire of Your love, that we may love You above all things and love our neighbors as ourselves. Deliver us from fear and relieve the anxiety of our hearts, that we may live out fully the hope planted within us and the new lives we received in the waters of our Baptism. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, anoint the words of those who preach to us Your Gospel, and open our ears to hear with faith all that He has done to save us. Raise up many who will serve You in the various callings of Your Church and who will serve us in Your name with Your Word and gifts. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, hear us on behalf of Donald, our president; _____, our governor; the Congress of the United States; and all state and local elected officials. Guide them according to Your Word, that their labors for our nation's health and welfare may not be in vain, nor forgetful of the vulnerable, aging and unemployed. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, across our nation so many are imprisoned. Bless all prison workers, that they may be humane and serve with integrity. Bless those incarcerated with hope for the future and amendment of life, help them to serve their sentences with patience and trust in You, and bless their families who love them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, hear us on behalf of those who cry to You in any need, especially the sick, the suffering, the disabled, the wounded in spirit, those who suffer mental illness and those in their last days on earth [*especially* _____]. Give them grace according to their need, and sustain them in their afflictions to the day when their sufferings will be exchanged for glory in the life to come. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, accept the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving from our lips and the tithes and offerings we bring this day. Increase in the hearts of Your people delight in Your mercy, gratitude for all Your benefits, and eagerness to support the mission of Your Church in word and deed. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O risen Savior, open the hearts of all who commune this day, that we may receive to our benefit Your body and blood in this Sacrament. Give comfort and certainty for those who long for Your Supper and believe Your Son's holy testament, that they may know they have what Christ says:

forgiveness of sins. By this communion, strengthen us in faith and equip us to love one another as You love us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All praise to You, dear Father in heaven, for You have opened up to us the way to eternal life in the resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We give You thanks for all those who have gone before us in the faith and now rest from their labors. Keep us in that same faith, and embolden us by Your resurrection to be fearless in the face of disease, chaos, loneliness and every sorrow of this world. Give us, with Job, the solemn expectation to cheer us: our Redeemer lives, and we, too, shall be resurrected and glorified to live with Him in His eternal Kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our resurrected Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught us to pray: 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.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Hymn 465 "Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds"

1 Now all the vault of heav'n resounds
In praise of love that still abounds:
 "Christ has triumphed! He is living!"
Sing, choirs of angels, loud and clear!
Repeat their song of glory here:
 "Christ has triumphed! Christ has triumphed!"
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

2 Eternal is the gift He brings,
Therefore our heart with rapture sings:
 "Christ has triumphed! He is living!"
Now still He comes to give us life
And by His presence stills all strife.
 Christ has triumphed! He is living!
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

3 O fill us, Lord, with dauntless love;
Set heart and will on things above
 That we conquer through Your triumph;
Grant grace sufficient for life's day
That by our lives we truly say:
 "Christ has triumphed! He is living!"
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

4 Adoring praises now we bring
And with the heav'nly blessed sing:
 "Christ has triumphed! Alleluia!"

Be to the Father and our Lord,
To Spirit blest, most holy God,
 All the glory, never ending!
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

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Closing Address and Announcements