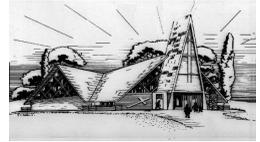




Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon- Easter Sunday The Lord has risen indeed!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in 1 Cor 15, 19-26:

- **ESV** 19 If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.
- 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
- 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
- 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.
- 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.
- 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.
- 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, and our hearts and fill us with the good news of Jesus' Resurrection. Amen.*

### **Dear Beloved under the Cross of Christ!**

- The Lord has risen, He has risen indeed! We are gathered here today, on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, because Jesus, the King of the Jews or Judeans, the Christ, our anointed Saviour has indeed risen from the dead! "The Lord has risen, He has risen indeed", is not merely a nice saying for such a pious event, it is a fact which turns all humanistic world-views or life-stances into ashes.
- Notice how Paul starts his great chapter on resurrection: He proclaims the Gospel as fact. This is not his own subjective faith which he is writing about! He didn't make it up. He received it. And what he received is in accordance with the OT Scriptures! You can go verify it and check if it is true. Paul writes, and we will see later, also the Gospel-writers wrote down the Easter-morning happenings for the sceptics! There is hardware evidence which not even a staunch unbelieving sceptic like a Thomas or a Paul could face up to. They were forced to believe because of the overwhelming evidence of what they saw and felt and heard with their own eyes!
- The Apostles Creed as we know it, is just a more unfolded version of the confession Paul cites here [1Cor 15,1-11]. Paul's point is, every sentence is according to the OT Scriptures! We know that it is according to the NT Scriptures, but it is already prophesied in the OT Scriptures! The Scriptures foretold and prophesied what Jesus fulfilled.

- Historical facts need witnesses! Here Paul names them- how many do you want- eyewitnesses: After His death Jesus has been seen by Cephas, that is Simon Peter, then by the Twelve, and then by more than five-hundred brothers at one time, most of whom were still alive in Paul's time, though some had fallen asleep, then by James, then by all the Apostles. This means the Corinthians could have gone and verified for themselves by making contact with the then still living eye-witnesses.
- Now, we have to remember, none of these eyewitnesses initially believed that Jesus would be resurrected! There is proof for this too! In the Gospel of Mark it is recorded that Jesus had told His disciples that He would go before them in Galilee after He had risen from the dead [Mk 14,28]! And after His resurrection this is what the angel told Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James to go tell His disciples and Peter! [Mk 16,7]. Jesus was already marching in Galilee! What were they still running to and from the grave, looking for a dead body, which they couldn't find and will never find! He was alive already, against all expectations, against all world-views of all people involved! What couldn't have happened, happened indeed!
- Our old Adam is a born sceptic! The nature we have been born into, is sceptical about dead bodies becoming alive! It just doesn't fit to what we normally experience! The accumulated conscience of mankind speaks against this!
- But, what about Thomas who refused to believe, even after he heard the eye-witness reports of his brothers and sisters in Christ that they had seen Christ! He refused to believe unless he would see and feel for himself! A perfect example of a modern sceptic! Jesus appeared to him and he could see and feel and hear for himself. Even the nail marks and the mark in the side Jesus could still show to him. Result: Thomas was simply forced to let go of his current narrow-minded world-view. He couldn't hold on to it any more. He had to face the living body of Christ who was not confined to space and time any more! He could come into a closed room without opening doors or windows, and yet Thomas could feel His flesh! The resurrected body of Christ!
- Even more so it happened to Paul himself. He persecuted those who proclaimed Christ! He was zealous against Jesus' followers! Then Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and confronted him with, "*why are you persecuting Me?*" Jesus took Paul's assault on the Christians personally. Paul also saw Christ. He saw the resurrected and ascended Christ in His state of Glory! What was he to do, but turn around and go the other direction! What a total embarrassment for Paul, a Pharisee! The ones he persecuted he now had to proclaim the Gospel. Jesus is alive, He must be alive otherwise Thomas and Paul, in fact all other disciples would never have become Apostles!
- They were forced to believe because they were confronted with the living resurrected body of Christ! Without the resurrected living Christ present in His Church, the Gospel would never have been proclaimed to the ends of the earth!

- This is so true if we consider another important fact that Paul addresses in our sermon text for today: ***“If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”*** If there wouldn't have been any hope beyond this life, then we Christians, who are following in our Lord's footsteps, that is suffering in this world, dealing with our sins, taking up our crosses each day, would have been of all people most to be pitied. If this was it, if it was true as unfortunately many prosperity gospel preachers preach, that this is our best life now, that this life on earth better be enjoyed to the full, because this is the best and only life we have, then Paul and all members of Christ's Body would have been suffering and working in vain!
- Furthermore, this gives proof of something, namely that Paul and all Apostles who suffered with him all their life, did not do it for personal gain in the here and now. They did it because they knew that Christ had risen. As He was the first one, the first-fruit of the resurrection from the dead, He was the guarantee that they as His disciples would follow Him there! The risen Lord Jesus who was seen by all these people backed by the OT Scriptures and by His own Words is our guarantee that our hope of eternal Life with Christ is not in vain. Paul and all Apostles knew that this was not their only life! This was only the prelude to the real Life still to come!
- They knew this, because they had encountered the real living Christ in what Paul calls “Spiritual-Body”! In [15,45] he writes: ***“Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”*** The last Adam, that is Christ, became a life-giving spirit! This is significant, because this life-giving spirit, Christ, still has a body! He is in the heavenly realm, but still He has a body, He remains Adam, man. He is both Lord and man. Yet, He is a life-giving Spirit!
- Not only is He alive, He is giving true eternal Life to those who hear His Gospel! He suffered and died and resurrected to be able to share His Life with us! He took our place on the Cross willingly, for our sakes! Then He was resurrected and since then He shares His Life with us, packaged in language, in the proclamation of the Gospel, handing out forgiveness of sins, through His ordained ministers, His Body packaged in with and under the bread we break and bless, His Blood packaged in with and under the wine we bless using His Words and pouring it out for the many! All these are gifts that come to us objectively from the outside of ourselves! We are not self-feeders, or saving ourselves! They are given to us by the ones He has called to hand out His gifts. All these gifts belong to Him! Without His presence in spirit and body they are nothing. The living Lord stands behind these gifts. He gives them using His people and the means of the first creation!
- This is most significant: He holds everything together. First Creation and the New Creation are held together by Christ. Many are searching for the world formula or the force that holds the universe together. Some assume it must be a massive black hole. But, the One who holds everything together is the resurrected Christ [Col 1,17]! He

holds you together and keeps you! Furthermore, He gives your life a **certain** future beyond the grave. It is a pure gift that we may look out to the future, in Christ, and say, it can only go better. And when we say this, we are not nuts, or some idealistic positivists. No. We are perfect realists, *in Christ!* We base our hope on substantial proof, objective proof, not on our own inner feelings or emotions, but on the holy Scriptures and on the experiences of the Apostles! This is a sober-minded confession!

• I am not saying, that realizing this, that the Lord has risen indeed is not allowed to make us emotional about this gift of God. I am saying, we are not basing our trust on feelings and inner-stirrings! We are basing our trust on objective facts, as objective as you can have them.

• We must not forget what we are speaking about here. We are speaking of true Life here! We are not trying to win an argument in an academic debate far removed from our existence. This is about the very basics of our existence, Life or Death. Jesus must reign until He has put the last enemy under His feet. The last enemy that *is being* destroyed is death. Jesus is busy destroying death today, here in this Divine Service!

• Whoever hears His Word of Life and believes it participates of His Life. Death will strike only our old Adam, who is declared dead in any case by God through Baptism! No harm done in terms of eternity. In fact, finally we will be completely free from our old evil Adam. LIFE to the full, without even the slightest possibility of death- that is more than life in the first paradise where death was a possibility- is certain for you!

• So, what is left to worry about? In reality! Think about it! If God is for us, who can be against us! Nothing to worry about, but many people and things to take care for, many things to learn about, the new Life in Christ, so that others may also get a Life! There are so many who are still captured in the world-view that leads to death! Don't you want to share it with him or her, young or old? Don't be ashamed to share this with those you know need this. Jesus made a promise that whenever you share His Word with others He will be present in your midst. Share this with the ones you love, at home and in the community and invite them to come and participate in the Liturgy which kills our old Adam and makes us participants of the victory over death! Life in Christ is not only possible, He makes it **certain** for us and for others! Alleluia. **Amen.**

• *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” **Amen.*** *Eph 1,3.*