

# “He Is Not Here”

Mark 16:1-8

Christ is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

Throughout this Lenten season, we looked at the mountains of the Bible. In our Old Testament reading, Isaiah tells us of another mountain. And on this mountain will be the “feast which has no end.” “A feast of rich food . . . and well-aged wine.” On this mountain He will “swallow up death forever” and “wipe away every tear.”

This is the mountain we are waiting for, and this is the mountain which is here for us already. We live in the “Now, but not yet” of the resurrection, eternal life, and salvation. In Christ, we join together on that mountain and get a fore-taste of the feast to come.

The absolute joy of Easter! The triumph of this day is not something which we as Christians reserve simply for this one day. We celebrate the empty tomb; we celebrate the risen Lord. The angels proclaimed to the women who went to the tomb, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here.”

You, who have come to God’s House to celebrate this greatest day of the year, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen,

and He *is* here.” What a joy that we do not have to search for the Savior of the world. He has risen, and He *is* here.

On Maundy Thursday, even though our focus was on the events happening at the Mount of Olives, we witnessed that night, and we witness each time we gather, the truth concerning the reality of Christ being present here in the bread and the wine – truly a feast of “rich food and well-aged wine.” We get to participate in a miracle every time we gather together. This is no half-hearted symbolic gesture. This is God in action – for you.

On Good Friday, again, we saw that Jesus does not offer up a half-hearted symbolic gesture for the forgiveness of sins. He offers up His real hands and feet to be pierced. He offers His real blood to be poured out. His life really did end. The Son of God really died on the cross as our Father in heaven fully poured out His wrath upon the sin of the world which Jesus had carried to Mt. Calvary. He is our mighty fortress shielding and protecting us and bringing us from death to life.

As we saw last Sunday, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the actual body of Jesus of Nazareth down from cross, wrapped Him in a shroud, buried Him in a tomb, and rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

And very early on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb and the stone has already been rolled away. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! We joyfully proclaim “He is risen indeed!! But how

do we know? There are many in our world, especially in recent generations who read this “story” and ask, “How do you know it is true?” “What is the evidence?”

Why didn't God leave evidence for future generations? He did. He left an empty tomb. In the past few years especially, I have been talking about the evidence of the empty tomb in sermons, Bible class, confirmation class, new member classes. It is the greatest news in the history of the world. There was an empty tomb in Jerusalem on the Sunday morning after Passover. By the way, even the enemies of Christ and His church agree that the tomb was empty – they simply disagree as to how it became empty. The angel simply said, “He is risen. He is not here.”

Just like His body and blood in which you participate really is here under the form of bread and wine – and that this is not some half-hearted, empty, feel-good ceremony. Christ is here. But at the tomb, the angel rightly says, “He is not here. He is risen.”

Just like the nails in His hands and feet were real, and were meant for you and me, but He took that burden we could not carry upon Himself. That gracious gift from God for you is here. Forgiveness for your sins is here. Because at the tomb, He is not here.

The empty tomb and the eyewitness accounts of Jesus rising from the dead is a reality with which we all need to wrestle. If what the Word of God says is true, then nothing else in the world deserves more of our

attention than what we are doing here today and what we will be doing here next Sunday, because every Sunday is a celebration of Easter. Christ rising from the dead deserves our utmost attention – and there is no close second. We are Easter people.

The people of God come together every Sunday and celebrate the empty tomb. The good news is that the reality of the empty tomb is meant for you and me also. Just as He is risen from the dead, so will God raise up all of His children. We celebrate the empty tomb of Jesus, because being “in Christ” the grave cannot hold us either. We proclaim Christ is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!! Alleluia!! in the sure confidence that this body will also rise again as He has swallowed up death forever and will wipe away every tear from all faces.

Again, throughout this Lenten season, we looked at the mountains of the Bible. On Good Friday I spoke of Mt. Calvary which I referred to as “the last mountain” on which Jesus declared, “It is finished.” But this is the mountain we are waiting for, and this is the mountain which is here for us already. We live in the “Now, but not yet” of the resurrection, eternal life, and salvation. In Christ, we join together on this mountain with angels, arch-angels, and all the company of heaven and get a fore-taste of the feast to come as heaven and earth join together in Christ. He is there in heaven, and He is here. But He is not in the grave, and the grave will not hold you either. Amen.