

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. David Mahsman

Easter 2
Saturday, April 26, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 27, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

“Jesus Opens Doors”

Revelation 1:4–18

The One Who Holds the Keys

A former colleague and good friend, another pastor, talks about a door at the end of every life. Each one of us will have to pass through it—no matter who you are, who you know, or what you’ve done in life. The door is marked “Death.” No one can go through it for you. And once you’ve gone through the door, it closes behind you—there’s no turning back.

For some, the other side of that door is a dark and desperate prison from which there is no escape—ever. For others, including us, there’s a loving Savior on the other side of that door. He holds the keys that unlock the door to that eternal prison. All those who believe and trust in Him will live in eternal freedom, joy and glory.

We can’t know on this side of the door what passing through it will be like, but one thing we do know: On the other side of that door, for us, is life. And we know that because we know

The One who holds the keys

I.

In the epistle lesson, the apostle John comes face to face with the “key holder,” Jesus Christ. John writes that Jesus’ face “was like the sun shining in full strength” (Rev. 1:16). John was overwhelmed. He fell at Jesus’ feet “as though dead.” Then he heard the voice of Jesus: “Fear not.” Don’t be afraid.

Jesus often told His disciples not to be afraid. At the beginning of a conversation, He often said, “Peace.” That’s saying, “Don’t be afraid.”

“I am the living One,” Jesus says. “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore!”

He was dead. Jesus, too, passed through that door marked “death.” But as we know and are celebrating during the Easter season, He rose from the dead and proclaimed His victory over death and the grave.

“And I have the keys of death and Hades,” He tells us. He alone was able to conquer the power of death and the devil. He alone has the power to break through the door marked “death” and to unlock for all believers the glories of heaven.

He is alive. He holds the keys. He is the everlasting Son of the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Last Sunday we celebrated His resurrection. He is alive! And we know that because He lives, we too will live forever.

As Christians, we have confidence in our eternal future. We know that because Christ went to the cross for us and because we have faith in Him—because we trust what He tells us—we will one day experience the glories of eternity in heaven. We won’t forever be imprisoned because of our sins. John says that Christ, who loves us, has “freed us from our sins” (v.5). Sin is what causes death, but in Christ we will be free!

Every time we confess our sins and seek the freedom that forgiveness brings, we are reassured of the life and freedom to come. That door marked “death” should not scare us. When you know the One who holds the keys, you can be sure that you have it made. Christ Jesus has made us alive and free for eternity!

II.

What’s sometimes harder to grasp is that He has also made us alive and free for now. It’s nice to know that someday I will be eternally free, but I have more immediate concerns and problems right now. What about now? What about today?

We all face problems and concerns, some greater, some smaller.

- “This economy is scaring me.”
- “My 401(k) or IRA [or 403(b)] is shrinking.”
- “The boss is asking me to do something I don’t really know how to do.”

- “I can’t get along with my parents.” “I can’t get along with my children.”
- “My marriage is in trouble.”
- “I’m plagued by bad habits that I can’t seem to beat.”
- “My health is not good.”
- “I’ve done some things that I’m ashamed of. What if people find out?”

Maybe some of these sound familiar. We all have our concerns. Whatever yours may be, they can really get in the way of the life and freedom that God intends for us. Maybe that’s because we forget that a loving God who can unlock the door of death can certainly unlock other doors, too.

Life and freedom in Christ aren’t just for some day in the future. They are for today. Christ hasn’t gained freedom just from eternal death; He has also gained freedom from the many things that imprison us right now. All the doors of all the prisons in which we find ourselves can be unlocked.

In our Gospel reading, the disciples are gathered behind locked doors after the resurrection of Jesus. The doors were locked because the disciples were afraid of their enemies. The locked doors are symptoms of the fear that gripped the disciples and stole their sense of life and freedom.

But the locked doors could not keep Jesus out. There He was, standing right in the middle of them all, and what did He say? “Peace”—don’t be afraid.

I don’t know what doors have you locked in—worry, greed, selfishness, guilt, addiction to something harmful, lust, impatience, fear, dishonesty. All of these and all our other sins can rob us of the life and freedom that God intends for us as His children. Yet Jesus can unlock and step through these doors. He has proved it. He has done it many times.

He can come to you, no matter where you are, no matter how bound up you feel, no matter how trapped and imprisoned you are, and He can free you. He comes to you with His word of peace, saying, “Don’t be afraid,” and “Your sins are forgiven”

Ask the risen Lord for His guidance. Study His Word. Trust Him to have the power that you do not have. Be willing to follow Him through open doors. Life and freedom, here and now, will be yours.

III.

For Christians, there is so much life to live, so much freedom to enjoy. No matter what our circumstances, we know what life really is all about.

In 1969, Peggy Lee had a hit with a depressing song that asks the question, “Is that all there is?” In the song, her home is destroyed by fire, she goes to the circus, she falls in love with a boy who leaves, and she contemplates death. With each experience, she asks, “Is that all there is?” And she repeats the chorus:

“Is that all there is?
Is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friend
Then let's keep dancing
Let's break out the booze and have a ball
If that's all there is”

What a sad commentary on the pursuit of life and happiness. So many people—maybe us, too, from time to time—seek fulfillment and success and the “good life” in the things of this world. But these pursuits are so often nothing more than exercises in disappointment. Sooner or later, the sad question is asked: “Is that all there is?”

Real life—the best life—is grounded in a relationship with a loving God, who blesses us with love, peace, fulfillment, and purpose.

John says he wrote his Gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

We know real freedom, too. Because we are forgiven, we are released from the bondage of all those things that would separate us from God. We can’t acquire this freedom on our own. It comes only through Jesus Christ.

That’s what the blessings of Easter are all about, not only eternally but here and now. When you are in Christ Jesus—the Living One, the firstborn from the dead, the holder of the keys—you are alive and you are free. Our Lord guarantees it! Amen.