

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD / EASTER DAY

Text: St. Mark 16:1-8

CHRIST is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Today is different from the scene we left behind on Good Friday. Good Friday was a scene full of agony, blood, and death. Along with Saints John, Mary, the Mother of God, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the wife of Clopas, we stood with the multitudes and watched our hope die with JESUS. As the earth shook, so too, were we shaken, to our very foundations. For this JESUS, was to be our Savior. He was to heal our pain and cure our diseases. He was to provide manna from Heaven. He was even to bring us back from death.

But now, all that has ended. The dark of night closed in on us in the middle of the day, darkening not only the skies, but our souls as well. JESUS was dead and so was all hope. We thought Him to be the SON of God, but if this was so, how is it that God deserted Him? How could His FATHER allow Him to face such torture and death? If He truly was the SON of God, why did He not come down from His cross? Where were the legions of angels to defend Him? Did God desire Him? Then, why did He not save Him? If God did not desire Him, if God was not with Him, then how can we be sure God is with us? If He can forsake His Son, will He not also forsake us?

This morning we walk along the sad and dusty streets of Jerusalem in the mournful light of early dawn with Sts. Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. As we walk along, we remember and talk of what we have witnessed, the blood, the dying words of JESUS, the venomous crowds, the darkness, and the earthquake with the rending of the Temple veil. We wonder that even this very morning, there was another earthquake.

We bring with us spices for the ritual anointing of the dead. We are not looking for life. Why would we look for the living among the dead? No, we come to the sepulcher, the tomb. JESUS CHRIST, in whom we hoped, is crucified, dead, and buried. He has gone where we, every one of us, are destined to go. He was forsaken by His Father, and so, we fear, are we.

The God we thought had forsaken us, who we thought had turned His face away from us and His SON, was present that terrible day, even though we could not see Him. It is not as though JESUS was not forsaken of His FATHER; that, He certainly was, but His FATHER was not absent; God the FATHER was there. He was present in the earthquakes; in the rending of the veil of the Temple; in the suffering, pain, and Blood. He was with us in the death of His SON. Do our LORD's words and sacrifice not prove God's presence for our salvation?

JESUS said, *“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the CHRIST to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* Standing at the foot of our LORD’s Cross, *“you are witnesses of these things.”*

You are witnesses of JESUS’ words, *“FATHER, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* He submitted Himself to the will of His FATHER, forsaken, that you would not be. Even as His lifeblood flowed into the earth, He prayed that His FATHER’s will be done, that is, that you be forgiven your sins. The FATHER was present, His SON, forsaken, that you be forgiven.

JESUS, the promised Seed of Eve, was born to crush the head of the serpent from Hell. But to do this Satan must first have bruised His heel. JESUS must submit to the will of His FATHER and become *“sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* He must suffer and die, the Innocent for the guilty. *“For CHRIST also suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the SPIRIT.”*

As He hung there on His Cross, suspended between heaven and hell, we witnessed JESUS cry, *“I thirst.”* As we heard these words, we did not yet, understand them. We thought His cry was simply that of a poor tortured man. But, the will of His FATHER was in that cry, for His thirst is for your salvation, for your eternal freedom from sin, Satan, and the grave; He thirsts for your eternal soul.

You witnessed the presence of the will and grace of the FATHER in JESUS’ words as He absolved the penitent thief who prayed, *“Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.”* seeking JESUS’ mercy in his final hour. With compassion, our crucified High Priest did the priestly work His FATHER sent Him to do. He interceded for this man and gave His *“Amen”* to the penitent thief’s prayer. *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Yet, of all you witnessed, JESUS’ word, *“Tetelestai”* that is, *“It is accomplished,”* should bring you the most peace and convince you that the FATHER was indeed present and in control throughout all that took place in Jerusalem and on Golgotha during this eventful week. For JESUS’ word, *“Tetelestai”* means that in His death all things required for your forgiveness have now been accomplished. The will and plan of our FATHER in Heaven for your salvation is complete. *“Tetelestai”* is a word recorded in the perfect tense, meaning that what JESUS accomplished on His Cross in the past, continues in the present, and on into the future—your future.

This means that what is accomplished in JESUS’ sacrifice for you cannot be undone. It is yours by God’s grace through faith forever! In effect, with His sacrifice, He has, as the author of Hebrews writes, entered into the Holy of Holies as our *“High Priest of the good things to come... Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own Blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*

What our LORD suffered in His Passion was not done for His benefit. The Passion of our LORD is *your* salvation, *your* hope, *your* joy, *your* life. All that CHRIST accomplished, He accomplished *for you*.

“It is finished.” What we witnessed in the Passion of JESUS is the atoning sacrifice whose aroma is well-pleasing to the FATHER. His Passion accomplishes for us what the blood of goats and bulls could not. Because of this Passion, JESUS is your way of escape. JESUS *“has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... having been “wounded for our transgressions.”* With His death, He has once and for all time released you from the slavery of sin, from the chains of the grave, from the death grip of Satan, and the gaping jaws of hell.

“It is finished,” and now God’s wrath is quenched, His anger extinguished. All that JESUS suffered He suffered for you. He loves you and died for you, and declaring His acceptance of this most perfect Sacrifice, God the FATHER, raised Him up again for you, that believing you will never die.

The Lamb, the only-begotten Son of God, who was slain is no longer dead. He is risen and gone to His FATHER to prepare a place for you. He is Jesus, your Savior, come to save His people. On that day so long ago, nailed to His throne and lifted up on that lonely mountain, JESUS declared a royal decree from His throne: *“Tetelestai... It is finished,”* and now, by divine proclamation, He declares, to you *“I have lived for you, died for you, and am raised up again for you, that you may be forgiven all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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