

Easter Sunday – Late

April 5, 2015

St. Mark 16:1-8

Christ's Resurrection is the World's Absolution

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In the Risen Christ, dear festive guests,

There is no happier celebration in all time and in all Creation than the Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord. The Bible tells us in Job that when God laid the foundations of the earth, a choir of newly created angels shouted for joy. That was good. The angels announced Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Those "good tidings of great joy" were about a Savior wrapped in strips of humility. That was good.

Those celebrations are no match for the angels' message, "He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him." "**Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o'er his foes.**" On Easter Day Jesus' work was gloriously completed. Jesus had reached the end of his walk on the road of our redemption, and had obtained from his Father all glory.

Every person in the world can and should be happy on account of Jesus Christ's bodily resurrection from death and the grave. It is for every one of you and for every one of them. How can this be true? We have the answer in our theme, **Christ's Resurrection is the World's Absolution**. This is certain and true. Everyone who wants to be saved needs to believe this.

Jesus' resurrection did not take place as a simple matter of course. We might get that idea from the creeds; he suffered, died, was buried, rose again from the dead. We recognize the meaning and fruits of Easter when we understand that Jesus' resurrection was the *purpose* of his suffering and death.

Jesus' purpose was to suffer and to die not for his own sins, but for the sins of all people. While our sins caused Jesus' suffering and death it, was God the Father in his counsel and foreknowledge who gave his Son over into the hands of unrighteous men.

Everything Jesus the one man did in his Passion, he did for all. The Father counted the sins of the entire world to Jesus as if they were his own. Jesus paid the temporal and eternal penalty for all those sins. Jesus offered up his body and blood as the only sufficient payment and only qualified Substitute to God the Father. Through Judas, Caiaphas,

and Pilate, God the Father condemned his only Son to death, the wages the world had coming because of Adam's sin.

Since this all-inclusive sin of billions of people is the cause of Jesus' suffering and death, then what is the all-inclusive meaning of his resurrection for those billions?

In his testimony on Pentecost, Peter declared, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge...but God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to hold him." [Acts 2:23,24]

When a judge sets you free after you have paid your fine, he is declaring your account settled. God the Father acquitted Jesus, freed him from death to declare our accounts to him settled. And not just ours, but the accounts of the whole world. By the last strike of the whip and by the nails and by his death, Jesus paid in full to the last sin every debt and punishment you and I and all sinners owed the holy God.

St. Paul assures us in his letter to the Romans, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." [5:18]

Christ's payment for sin is for all people. Therefore, Christ's new life in the resurrection is for all people. Christ's acquittal is your acquittal. Christ's absolution is the world's absolution. His justification the justification of all the people who have lived, live now and will live before the end of the world.

In Christ, the Father already has forgiven all your sins. Christ is who makes the gospel the power of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He is the assurance of the general absolution the pastor speaks in worship, and that we speak to one another privately in answer to a confession, "I have sinned against you."

This brings us to the necessity and blessing of faith. Christ's resurrection is the world's absolution. Everyone who wants to be saved needs to believe this.

When you give someone a gift, the recipient needs to take that gift in hand to use it. If they turn down the gift in false modesty, or pride, or judgment that you actually are not putting something into their hands, they lose the benefit and enjoyment of the gift. That does not mean the gift has not been given. Luther used the example of a king giving you a castle. If you do not accept it that does not make the king a liar, nor

is it his fault you were not interested. “You have deceived yourself and it is your fault. The king certainly gave it.”

It is like this with the gift of justification, the general absolution God has pronounced on the world through Christ’s resurrection. God has forgiven the sins of all people but not all people are saved. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Do not merely glance at the wondrous Easter gift of Jesus’ empty tomb and then pass by in apathy. Take the angels’ words to heart. Learn from Thomas and instead believe the other disciples, “We have seen the Lord.”

It is faith *alone* that saves because faith is the hand that grasps Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead. There is nothing more we can or need to pay. God has marked our debt, “Paid in full.” Trust that the absolution God the Father pronounced on the entire world two thousand years ago remains in effect. God is faithful and his gifts and calling are irrevocable. The King has given you the perfect castle in the kingdom of God. God has set a place for you in his Father’s house in heaven. He is inviting you to a place at “the wedding supper of the lamb.” [Rev. 19:9]

May you all receive in faith Christ’s resurrection that is the world’s absolution. Then, you will see the glory of God. The Spirit will fill your hearts with the greatest joy and consolation Easter brings. Your death will not be death but the gateway into everlasting life and blessedness. Amen. <SDG>