

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL

Paschal Sermon

John 20:1-18, I have seen the Lord...

Good Morning - He has Risen

Prayer Needs - Continue to pray for Luis in El Salvador.

He has Risen - He has Risen indeed.

What we remember in this Holy Week is Jesus and the Victory of God over sin, hell, death and the grave! Jesus Christ took the symbol of Roman oppression and dominance - the symbol of the the victory of Caesar and revealed the Victory of God!

This is what shapes our own understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

When we speak of following Jesus, we are talking about the crucified Messiah. His death was not simply the messy event that enables our sins to be forgiven and which can thereafter conveniently be forgotten. The cross is the surest, truest, and deepest window on the very heart and character of the living and loving God; the more we learn about the cross, in all its historical and theological dimensions, the more we discover about the One in whose image we are made, and hence about our own vocation to be the cross-bearing people, the people in whose lives and service the living God is made known. And when therefore we speak of shaping our world, we do not —we dare nor — simply treat the cross as the thing that saves us 'personally, but which can be discarded when we get on with the job. The task of shaping our world is best understood as the redemptive task of bringing the achievement of the cross to bear on the world. In undertaking that task, the methods, as well as the message, must be cross-shaped from start to finish.

NT Wright

In our gospel reading today we find Mary Magdalene, Peter and John who each one not just telling their story of the resurrection but most important they encounter what the early church describes as God's revelation of Himself...

beginning in verse 8 from the Voice translation...*and based on what he (John) saw, faith began to well up inside him!* Then to Verse 18 as Mary announced to the disciples *'I have seen the Lord, and this is what He said to me...'*

Beloved Easter is not a day on our calendar to treat like Memorial day to remember a fact of history - what we proclaim in this gospel is *He has Risen* and He is revealing Himself today!

He has Risen - He has Risen indeed.

- This is not simply a testimony of our mind but as we gather the testimony of our life.
- This gospel has encountered my heart and my life in a real and tangible way.

The Stone is rolled away...Theologian Alan Culpepper said it right when he observes;

'the stone has been rolled away' is NOT so Jesus could get out - but so that we can see in!

The Good News of the Empty Tomb is NOT that we can locate it in Israel today - He is not here. Then where do we locate Jesus? Where Mary Magdalene the disciples met Him - in our lives right where we are in the midst of our fears and uncertainty. It's here that He proclaims 'do not be afraid'. He is risen is not as much about an empty tomb as it is about a resurrected Christ who meets us in our life.

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!

Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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Jesus is Risen beloved we do not have to go on pilgrimage to another place but home to our lives filled with disappointment in a world shaking in fear and despair - the empty tomb proclaims that He will meet us there. This same Jesus invites us to lay down fear and meet the risen Christ today and that is Good News.

This week I want to share what is known in much of the Church as the Easter Paschal Homily (sermon) it was written by **St. John Chrysostom** most estimate about 400 AD. He was a Church Father and considered an excellent theologian and teacher.

In the Eastern Orthodox tradition it is repeated every Easter – its almost as if to agree that it cannot be improved.

- This ancient sermon is all about Jesus!
 - After He died, went to Hell and completely disempowered it, leaving Hell and its demons **“embittered.”** This word, repeated several times, means “resentful.”
 - Such is the reaction of one who has been deceived, or tricked.
 - This speaks of the “Christus Victor” theory of atonement in which Jesus comes to earth posing as a human (and hence a sinner), but when he dies and goes to Hell (as all humans/sinners must), and then He reveals his true identity!
 - He's now able to bring the full power of God to destroying Hell's hold on all creation.
 - Overcoming Death by Death – defeating Sin by becoming Sin.

This sermon is not to be just “preached.”

- There is considerable intended **“audience participation.”**
 - **Every time the speaker says "embittered," the congregation is to repeat it.**
 - **Same with the word "risen."**
 - **And every time the word "dead" or "death" is spoken,**
 - The congregation stomps its feet, just like Jesus stomped on Hell.
 - It is a bit of a reminder of the **festival of Purim and the traditional reading of the Book of Esther**; there the Jewish congregation is to stomp its feet and boo and hiss and shake noisemakers every time the name of the villain Haman is mentioned.

Traditionally no sits during the reading the Sermon:

PASCHAL HOMILY

by St. John Chrysostom (d. 407 CE)

(First paragraph responsive)

If any be a devout lover of God,

let him partake with gladness from this fair and radiant feast.

If any be a faithful servant,

let him enter rejoicing into the joy of his Lord.

If any have wearied himself with fasting,

let him now enjoy his reward.

If any have laboured from the first hour,

*And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.*

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let him receive today his rightful due.

If any have come after the third,

let him celebrate the feast with thankfulness.

If any have come after the sixth,

let him not be in doubt, for he will suffer no loss.

If any have delayed until the ninth,

let him not hesitate but draw near.

If any have arrived only at the eleventh,

let him not be afraid because he comes so late.

For the Master is generous and accepts the last even as the first.

He gives rest to him who comes at the eleventh hour

just as to him who has labored from the first.

He has mercy upon the last and cares for the first;

to the one He gives, and to the other He is gracious.

He both honors the work and praises the intention.

Enter all of you, therefore, into the joy of our Lord, and,

whether first or last, receive your reward.

O rich and poor, one with another, dance for joy!

O you ascetics and you negligent, celebrate the day!

You who fasted and you who have not fasted, rejoice together.

The table is rich-laden: feast royally, all of you!

The calf is fatted: let no one go away hungry!

(Get Ready for Actions and Repetition)

Let all partake of the feast of faith.

Let all receive the riches of goodness.

Let no one lament their poverty,

for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one mourn their transgressions,

for the light of forgiveness has **risen (repeat)** from the tomb.

Let no one fear death, (stomp)

for the **death (stomp)** of the Saviour has set us free.

He has destroyed **death (stomp)**, by undergoing **death (stomp)**.

He descended into Hades and took Hades captive!

He **embittered (repeat)** it when it tasted His flesh!

And anticipating this, Isaiah exclaimed:

"Hades was embittered (repeat) when it encountered Thee in the lower regions". (Isaiah 14:9 Hebrew)

- It was **embittered,(repeat)** for it was brought to nothing!
- It was **embittered,(repeat)** for it was mocked!
- It was **embittered,(repeat)** for it was overthrown!
- It was **embittered,(repeat)** for it was despoiled!
- It was **embittered, (repeat)** for it was put in chains!

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!

Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

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Hell received a body and encountered God!

It received earth and confronted Heaven!

It took what it saw,

but crumbled before what it had not seen!

O **Death**, (stomp) where is thy sting?

O Hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen! (repeat) And you, o **death**,(stomp) are annihilated!

Christ is risen! (repeat) And the demons has fallen!

Christ is risen! (repeat) And the angels rejoice!

Christ is risen! (repeat) And Life reigns!

Christ is risen! (repeat) And not one **dead (stomp)** remains in a tomb;

for Christ having **risen (repeat)** from the **dead,(stomp)**

has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be Glory and Power, now and forever, and from all ages to all ages.

Amen!

The Stone is rolled away...Theologian Alan Culpepper said it right when he observes;

'the stone has been rolled away' is NOT so Jesus could get out - but so that we can see in!

The Good News of the Empty Tomb is NOT that we can locate it in Israel today - He is not here.

Then where do we locate Jesus? Where Mary Magdalene and Mary and the disciples met Him - in our lives right where we are in the midst of our fears and uncertainty. It's here that He proclaims 'do not be afraid'.

He is risen is not as much about an empty tomb as it is about a resurrected Christ who meets us in our life. Christ before me, behind me, to my right, to my left – in the eye of everyone who sees me in the ear of everyone who hears me, Christ all around me – Christ formed within me by faith.

Closing Prayer and Communion

Creator of the universe,

you made the world in beauty,

and restore all things in glory

through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured

by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,

the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,

to the glory of your name.

Send us out, with the joy of Mary Magdalene,

to proclaim that we have seen the Lord,

so that all the world may celebrate with you

the banquet of your peace. Amen.

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!

Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

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