

Let us laugh with our Lord today! Satan and all his allies threw absolutely everything they had against the Lord's Christ. Their bonds of hell, death and grave could not hold Him. He broke them asunder for us today and will in the end of all things place an impenetrable seal on their eternal prison door. Listen how Ps. 2 expresses it:

**Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?**

**The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and his anointed, saying,**

**"Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us."**

**He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision.**

**Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
"I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."**

**I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me,**

**"You are my son, today I have begotten you.**

**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.**

**You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."**

**Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.**

**Serve the LORD with fear, with trembling kiss his feet,**

**lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled.**

**Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

Your refuge is the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. In Him your bonds and cords of sin have been ripped asunder forever. This is our season of great joy. With laughter in your heart, a smile on your face, sing of this great joy again using hymn #348. Please rise.

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Almighty God, who through the resurrection of Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, replenish us, we humbly ask You, with Your heavenly grace, that, dying unto sin always and living unto righteousness, we may at last triumph over death and the grave, in the full image of our risen Lord, to whom, with You and the Holy Spirit, be

honor and glory, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 114)

In Christ Jesus, whose body once lay lifeless in the tomb for three days, is risen from the dead and lives forevermore, dear fellow redeemed:

Apparently the sealed and guarded tomb of Jesus had been left undisturbed until the first faint streaks of that great Easter dawn appeared. But now another earthquake struck like the one on Friday when Jesus breathed his last on the cross. It was felt with great shaking possibly as our Lord took His first breath in His resurrection. Coincident with this an angel of the Lord descended, rolled away the stone and sat upon it as the guardian of the opened and empty grave. His appearance was that of lightening and his garment as white as snow. In response to this the trembling guards became as dead men.

By this time the women had arrived and answering the fearful response of the guards, the angel says to the women “Do not [YOU] be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.” The guards’ fear caused them to bury their faces in the dirt as though they were dead. But the fears of these believing women were addressed by referring to Jesus’ words telling them of His death and resurrection. At some point one way or another, believers and unbelievers must respond to the: **The Deadly Seriousness of “Jesus, Who Was Crucified, Has Risen.”**

## I

The guards were the first witnesses to the empty tomb. Did they play dead in an effort to escape this powerful magnificent holy creature who now stood guard in their place revealing that the body of Jesus was gone? At their first opportunity they got up and fled. Some hightailed it to the chief priests reporting what they had seen. These unscrupulous religious leaders still had money leftover after paying the Betrayer and they bribed the guards now to lie. It was not even a well-concocted lie. How could the disciples come during the night, roll that stone away without waking them from their supposed slumber?

But the deeper question is what caused these guards, chief priests and elders to fear the truth of *“Jesus, who was crucified, has risen?”* so that they would stake their futures and reputations on such an untenable tale? No doubt as it is with all fear among us humans, it was their overwhelming fear of death. The prospect of a risen Jesus, who was shamefully treated and executed by them, now threatened them. It was seen as a deadly serious threat against them that a living

Jesus would now actively seek to avenge the wrongs perpetrated against Him.

Remember unbelief lives in the kingdom of darkness with the threat of death as its power over others. A resurrected Jesus was not seen by them as a glorious truth promising life, but as a threat of death and destruction to their sin-generated lifestyles. Unbelief finds this life in this world as the only hope there is. The affluence of riches and celebrity; the mind numbing effects of drugs and alcohol, not to mention such forms of entertainment as pornography and reality TV; relationship killers of self-centeredness and the politics of greed, power, personal destruction are all used by the unbelieving world to escape the reality that utopia, heaven here on earth, will never be achieved in this broken world. Jesus' death was supposed to help achieve such a utopia for these Jerusalem unbelievers. But He was no longer dead.

## II

But you, my fellow believers in the resurrected Christ, rejoice to hear that Jesus, the Holy One crucified for you, is now risen. But even in the midst of our Easter joy we respond with sober reflection upon our sin and the many temptations the unbelieving world puts before us to escape the miseries of our lives. Christians fall for these lies more often than we even want to admit. Satan and his allies convince us that since we have forgiveness with God in Christ, we can go back to living in sin without consequences. As though "*forgiveness*" means a license to sin. Jesus' work, my fellow believers, was not to save us in order to sin, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death He saved us from sin and its deadly dominion over us, the sinners.

These once mournful women, followers of the Lord Jesus, now hearing the message that their beloved Lord who had been crucified has now risen, seeing the empty slab where once His body lay, now leave the tomb still with fear, but also with joy filling their hearts. Jesus' words to them, which He often spoke, were deadly serious.

Peter once said this about the Word Jesus spoke to them: "You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God." The angel redirected the women to those gracious words of life, which they neglected to hear with joy the day before on the Sabbath. Rather, the words of death and sorrow filled their hearts, words that come so easily to mind from the unbelieving world and our own anxious sinful flesh.

So seriously did the disciples take this news, which Mary Magdalene spoke trying to catch her breath after running back to

them inside the city, that Peter and John likewise ran to the tomb. If indeed Jesus had risen from the dead, this was a game changer, greater than the resurrections they had witnessed Jesus perform for the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son of Nain and His good friend Lazarus.

Jesus having power over the death of others underscores His miraculous powers for sure. For the One who healed so many diseases, calmed storms, fed thousands with so little and changed water into wine, reversing the effects of death upon others would be an awesome extension of that supernatural power. But for One who had succumbed to death to raise Himself, that showed a power which rocks every law of nature and every philosophical presupposition to its core. With this event of Jesus rising from the dead pulled the rug out from under the kingdom of darkness and all its deadly lies.

The Easter message is deadly serious. With Jesus rising after taking to Himself our punishment of death, we now have full and free forgiveness for all our sin and even though we die, yet shall we live. Do not treat your sin lightly. Our Lord certainly did not. But do laugh heartily at the feeble attempts of Satan and his allies who are bound forever. Live now as those liberated from the bonds of sin and death by your risen Lord, who broke the bonds which once held you in sin and death. Bend low to kiss His wounded feet. He truly is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.