

Lord Jesus, You alone have the Words of eternal life, keep speaking to us giving us life. Save us from our deserved death, for we cannot save ourselves. Amen.

*[Paul continued saying to his Athenian philosophically astute hearers: God] has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead." Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.*

In Christ Jesus, who did what most even today consider to be the unthinkable – He broke free from the shackles of death by His own power, dear fellow redeemed:

Up until the day Jesus raised His first dead body, there were only three biblically recorded resurrections: Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath, Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman and a man whose corpse came in contact with Elisha's buried bones came back to life. Otherwise death seemed so invincible. Jesus' mockers when He was on the cross thought when He cried out: *Eli, Eli!, My God, My God!* that He was calling for Elijah, who you might remember never died but went straight to heaven with his body and soul still united and who was prophesied to appear again right before Christ's arrival. Jesus made it clear this was a prophecy of John the Baptizer. Jesus' mockers said: "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." Perhaps they thought Jesus was asking for Elijah to come and raise Him from His imminent dead.

What happened at dawn on Easter went well beyond what the average resurrection mockers even today would think. Elijah, Elisha and Jesus were the divinely sent prophets who did the extraordinary work of raising others. But for Jesus to be dead confirmed by many witnesses and then alone in His grave to raise Himself back to life, again - confirmed by many, would grab the attention of some of the most hardened skeptics.

Paul was received by three different kinds of hearers in Athens the day of our text: the dismissive mockers / those interested to hear more / and those who believed this wonderful news that someone was able to break free from the universally dreaded curse, namely death. You are here this morning, not as mockers, unless someone dragged you out of bed on this cold morning to our cemetery. You are here at least because you have heard this message of Christ's resurrection before and want to hear it again. Blessed are you. Even more blessed are you, if you have gone beyond being interested in this incredible account to

actually believing this resurrection was accomplished **for you**. Briefly let us consider this: **Those Who Believe Jesus Rose Will Hear of It Again and Again.**

From the earliest days of the New Testament Church - from Pentecost onward, the Church has regularly designated Sunday as the Day of the Lord. Breaking from the OT seventh Day Sabbath, the early Christian Church switched to the eighth day, the day of life, not only reminiscent of the first day after the week of creation, but the day the Lord rose from the dead. Every Sunday, even during the penitential season of Lent is to be observed by us as the Day of Life.

For example, on Pentecost, 50 days after Easter the early Jerusalem Christians were gathered together for their divine service and by the end of the day after 3,000 were baptized, we read how they continued with this practice. "[T]hey devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." A couple decades later, when Paul was taking up a collection to bring back to the persecuted Jerusalem Christians, he encouraged the Corinthian Christians to give regularly on the first day of the week. Why? Because that was the day they regularly met for their weekly divine service and as part of their worship of the risen Lord they took up offerings to support the proclamation of His resurrection Gospel. It is still our custom today. In our country, the NFL may think it owns that first day of the week at least for about five months of the year, but not with the Church, which still considers Sundays for the most part to be the Lord's Day.

We are told two prominent philosophies were represented in the Areopagus: Epicureanism and Stoicism. Such adherents listened to Paul because they heard him speak of a strange concept in the ancient Greco-Roman world, namely physical resurrection. Both the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies were not religions. They were lifestyles by which their followers were to approach this life alone. Their teachings had nothing to do with any related concept of an afterlife. So when Paul speaks of a physical resurrection to life, it would cause some of them to re-evaluate their individual ways of approaching this life.

There was a group among them who mocked as ludicrous what Paul was declaring. But since their philosophies did not really give any hope after life, there were some who said to him: "We will hear you again about this." Again maybe some of you early risers this Easter morning are at that point too. We do not know if Paul ever went back to this gathering of philosophers to speak more of these wonderful truths. Their comment may have been just a shallow response without any real intent to consider Jesus' resurrection again.

However, Paul was received by some believers, among them were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris. It would appear that Dionysius was one of these philosophers and perhaps he later returned to his friends and associates declaring this resurrection truth himself after Paul left their area. What these believers received is what you also receive – forgiveness of

all your sins, everlasting life and eternal salvation. These gifts are for all, even for such philosophers today. As Jesus declared: "Because I live, you too shall live."

Many of you, if not all, are like these believers. Having come to know and trust in the resurrected Lord to be the Savior of all sinners, you gather again and again on this first day of the week, this day of the Lord, to hear this resurrection truth proclaimed to you. It never gets old. Your life changes, but this truth speaks to all the many changes of life. You continue to struggle with your sin. You continue to suffer in this life. You continue to be confronted with death, of loved ones, even serious, or terminal diagnoses for yourselves. In the midst of such changes you continue to receive the crucified and risen Lord Jesus' true body and blood, which bestows upon you the only antidote for your sin and death.

In part this is why we have been meeting on this sacred ground for the past 25 years. We are surrounded by the graves of many of our fellow believers from three centuries now, who spent their days hearing this message of resurrection in Christ again and again, proclaiming the fruits of His suffering and death by receiving the blessed Sacrament. On that last Day Christ Jesus, *the Man whom the Father has appointed*, will return and with His Voice rip their graves open, filling their unearthed bodies with life once again. By this same powerful Word He has given you life now through His work upon the cross and out of the grave. Even if you die, yet shall you live.

The Lord is risen! **(C: He is risen indeed!)**

Now we get to hear of this blessed Word of Life again on the next Lord's Day!  
Amen.