

The Easter Exordium

Christ is Risen... **He is risen, indeed!**

It was messy. No doubt about it. And it stunk.

Not just the situation, but the environment.

There had been lots of disobedience leading up to it. ^{1:3; 4:1-3}

How do you remove yourself from the Lord's presence?^{2:4}

They cast lots. ^{1:7}

There was blood-guilt. He was innocent of the death penalty as far as they knew. ^{1:14}

They tried everything they knew of to avoid it, but it didn't help. ^{1:5, 13}

Finally, they simply had to. ^{1:5, 13}

Besides he told them it needed to be done. ^{1:12}

...As soon as it was done, they knew that they would not perish. ^{1:15}

And there he rested. He had sacrificed himself for the rest of the men. ^{1:14}

He was wrapped up. ^{2:5}

Yet even now, prayers came to his heavenly Father. ^{2:1}

Prayers of thanksgiving for His salvation. ^{2:9}

And that, even before he could see the light of day.

It had been 3 days.

For three days, he had laid there. What else could he do?

No one had ever returned from this.

But it was God's steadfast love that brought him back to the land of the living. ^{2:8}

And his captor had no choice but to disgorge him, to vomit him up. ^{2:10}

It was a completely unnatural act.

But he had more work to do. People needed to hear of their salvation.

They needed to know the Gospel of life.

And many believed and were saved because of it.

...

Who knows how long that fish smell clung to him. Like I said, it was messy.

But Jonah's story is a resurrection story, a foreshadow of what we are celebrating today.

In fact, his story was the sign that Jesus gave to those who didn't believe Him.

They were to be given the sign of Jonah,

"as Jonah was three days... in the belly of the great fish

so will the Son of Man be three days ... in the heart of the earth." ^{Matthew 12:40}

People Loved by God,

The one greater than Jonah is here. ^{Matthew 12:41}

Not disgorged by a fish, but by death, and such an upheaval it is that all whom death has
and ever will swallow up will be vomited up on the Last Day at our risen Lord's call.

And so that you and I and many others may be raised to life everlasting,

Jesus continues to work, calling sinners to repentance AND TO FAITH.

Rise & Rejoice with me as we sing our **Exordium Hymn: #348 - He is Arisen! Glorious Word**

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here."^(NKJV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

People loved by God, seekers of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified and is now risen!

Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote, "**A hanged man is cursed by God.**"^{Deut.21:23}

What is done with a cursed man?

He is disowned. Shame beclouds his name and his family.

He is forgotten. You don't talk about him or about what had happened.

So what a scandal it was that Jesus' body was laid to rest in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb.

Surely word would get out to the other members of the Sanhedrin.

And not only him, but Nicodemus as well, both taking courage, to do what is not done.

Two respected religious leaders taking possession of the body of this cursed Man.

Earlier, St. John tells us, they were Jesus' disciples, but secretly for fear of the Jews.

Though Jesus was cursed by the Jews, and by Pilate, condemned to be hung on a tree, the cross, they recognized His righteousness, that He was a man sent from God.

They did not consent to Jesus' condemnation in keeping with Proverbs 31:9,

"Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."

But this was 3 days ago, on Good Friday afternoon.

We are now in the morning of Easter Sunday, and we find that there is another who is not ashamed of the One who was cursed having died on a tree.

Not only these two respected men... and the women who came to anoint His body, but neither was God the Father ashamed of Him.

Listen to the announcement of the angel in our text:

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

Here is God's official messenger to address these first witnesses of the empty tomb and one of the first things he does is proclaim Jesus' name and the thing that was so scandalous.

This is more than just the angel telling them that they were in the right tomb.

This was God the Father glorifying His Son and announcing His great accomplishment, He was crucified.

Yes, this is the great glory of Jesus of Nazareth — He was crucified... lifted up... hanged on a tree, cursed by man and condemned by God.

Of course, it wasn't just the fact that He was crucified; lots of people have been crucified.

It is not a glorious death by any stretch of the imagination.
But Christ's glory is that His crucifixion was not for anything that He had done
but for the redemption of the whole world, the payment for the sins of every single sinner.
St. Paul writes succinctly: **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us
– for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”** Gal.3:13

...
You know that the world still curses Jesus, still wishes He were dead, and still hates His message.
The world does not want to repent, does not want to change, does not want to submit to God's will.
In truth, the world does not want to be redeemed or saved.
And so the world scorns and curses the Lord's greatest glory,
its own salvation by the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ.
The world is scandalized by the weakness of a God who would suffer and die to serve His creation.
And His resurrection, it mocks and ridicules in unbelief.

But it isn't just the world that has a problem with Jesus' death and resurrection, is it?
It isn't just the world that has a problem with repentance and desiring to do God's will.
In truth, we are cut from the same cloth.
You have the same natural desire to act according to your own will and scorn of God's.
You have the same natural scorn of repentance.
You realize the same scandal of following a God who was crucified.
You have the same natural unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus.

But wait a minute. Here you are on Easter morning.
You wouldn't be here if you didn't believe in the resurrection, would you?
Ah, so there we see God's greatness even more, in that He called you out of your natural unbelief,
out of your scorn of repentance, and breathed into your lifeless spirit the breath of life and
gave you a new heart with faith to receive Jesus' work of redemption.
He has washed you in baptism and through it, as St. Paul says, you **were baptized into Jesus' death
and raised to newness of life, For if we have been united with Him in a death like His,
we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.** Romans6:3-5

So Jesus' death and resurrection are yours. You have died to sin and live to Christ.
But if this is true, why are you here? If you already have eternal life?
You are here because the old Adam, your sinful nature still survives in you and,
like with Nicodemus and Joseph, we struggle with fear and doubt and unbelief.
We fear the scorn of the world. We fear the cursing of those who are hostile to Christ and His Church.
We doubt the power of God to protect us through trials.
We doubt His wisdom in leading us through the struggles
rather than letting us live with our Christian faith in worldly ease.
We cry out like the father of the demon-possessed boy, **Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.** Mark9:24
And so He does. Here (the church).

...
The first women in the tomb did not yet believe in the resurrection when they stepped into it.
The angel greeted them, **“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.**

He is risen! He is not here."

Your Savior is not a dead Savior.

Yes, He was crucified. He was dead. He was buried.

But He is no more. Death could not keep the righteous Son of God.

He was not in the tomb.

Those women left His tomb with a mixture of feelings, they trembled, were amazed, and afraid.

They weren't sure what to think. But on the way back, we are told that Jesus met them.

While their emotions went every which way, they were certain Jesus was no longer dead.

He who was crucified for us, now lives for us.

Your risen Lord still comes to you His disciples.

Though you are filled with a mixture of realities at times, fear and faith, doubt and certainty,
unbelief and belief, and sometimes don't know what to believe,

He comes to you to give you certainty.

Just as certainly as He appeared to the women in His glorified and risen body & blood,

so He is present here to give you that same certainty in the same glorified and risen body & blood.

He is here to dispel your fear of the world,

to give you courage, as He gave Joseph and Nicodemus, to do what is right in His eyes.

He is here to relieve your doubt,

so that you may see what a scandal it is to reject the free gift of life earned for you by Jesus' death.

He is here to strengthen your belief,

as you hear Him speak to you words of consolation and peace, forgiveness and salvation,

for He who was crucified, He is risen, He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria