

*As follows in Jesus' name:*

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, **so that you may be accepted.** On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the Lord with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." (ESV)

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

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What does this text have to do with... THIS (the cemetery)... and THIS (the Lord's Supper)?

We find ourselves today on the day after the Sabbath after the Passover as spoken of in Leviticus.

This day was during the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread, when all the old leaven was to have been completely cleared out of the Jewish houses.

On this first day of the week after the Passover, the Jews would ceremonially reap enough sheaves for this firstfruits offering.

Then they would bring the threshed and milled grain to the High Priest who was then to wave it before the Lord as the offering of firstfruits required by God.

This day marked the change from the old harvest to the new harvest,

because until the firstfruits sheaves were offered before the Lord,

no one was to eat any of the new grains from the fields... as Leviticus spells out,

**you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God.**

As it was during the Week of Unleavened Bread, all things would then be new:

new grain and, after that week, new leaven for the year;

any decaying and moldy grain stuffs were able to be discarded to make room for the new.

Thus we will hear in the Epistle later this morning from 1 Corinthians 5:7-8:

**Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.**

**For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**

**Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

...

The firstfruits were not just to be the first, but to be the best... the grain reaped at its peak.

This offering, given them by the Lord, was an acknowledgement

that the whole harvest they were about to reap was not their own, but that it belonged to the Lord, nor was the harvest a result of their goodness, but of His.

In mercy, He provided the grain for sowing from the year before.  
In mercy, He provided the fields as their inheritance.  
In mercy, He provided the rains to water the seed.  
In mercy, He provided the sun.  
In mercy, He provided the increase and maturity of the grain.

But as the Lord gave this statute to Israel, He made it clear that this was more than just a harvest ritual. He told them, the priest **shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, SO THAT YOU MAY BE ACCEPTED.** That acceptance was more than just the ability to be in God's holy presence without perishing; it meant that the people had God's favor, that the Lord would act favorably upon them. So not only did the Lord, in mercy, provide them with this new harvest, but, in mercy, He also provided an objective way that they may know that they were accepted/favored by the Lord. It's the same as the Father saying of Jesus, "**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**"

...

Which gets us back to our real purpose of meditating on this particular text this blessed morning. It is to see, as St. Paul directs us, that the old covenant regulations regarding ...**festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths were a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.** In other words, we are to find the fulfillment of this firstfruits offering in Jesus. Colossians 2:16-17  
And again St. Paul helps us to see this in 1 Corinthians 15<sup>[20]</sup>:  
**But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**  
The firstfruits, not in His death, but in His resurrection to glory... never to die again.

...

That first Easter Sunday morning, the women went to the tomb. That morning the High Priest was to present the firstfruits of the grain offering to the Lord. The women looked for Jesus in vain. He was not there among the dead. He had already risen and presented Himself to the Father as the firstfruits to rise from the dead. Because He, as our High Priest, has offered Himself, the pure, unblemished Lamb of God, we know that we are accepted by the Father. Because the Father has raised Jesus from the dead, we who have been buried with Christ through Baptism will also rise like Him in the resurrection on the last day. As St. Paul points out, we will each rise in our **own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.** 1 Corinthians 15:23  
**And the dead in Christ will rise first.**  
**Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.** 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

If Christ is the firstfruits, there must also be those that come after. As we look around us, we see the grave sites of many loved ones. We began at Paul Trapp's this year, and here also lie Hans Riedel, John Harstad, Iris Fagan, Moses Lai, Lyla Nelson, Nick Corso, Gloria Johnson, Eileen Kelly, Simon Shedrock, Esther Swanson, Talitha Gullixson, Les Perry, Jim Langseth, Esther Rose, and so many more saints. Christ is coming back for them. Just as He is coming back for us.

But before we leave this place, let us also partake of the feast provided for us by God.

Here, we receive His firstfruits offering, receiving not only His crucified,  
but also His RISEN body and blood.

We have cleared out the old leaven of malice and evil through repentance;  
we are done with the old stale bread of affliction.

And now feast on the new Bread of Life, the bread of God's sincerity and truth.

By Jesus' death, your sins are atoned for.

By His resurrection, the Father has given you an objective way to know that you are accepted by Him,  
that He looks with favor upon you

and will bring you into the harvest of the resurrection on the Last Day.

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

*Soli Deo Gloria*