

John 20:1-18; I Cor. 15:1-28; The Meaning and Benefit of the Resurrection 1. The Lowly Expectation 2. The Surprising Encounter 3. The Lasting Benefit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, today is the day on which we celebrate Resurrection Sunday- we remember that our Lord rose from the grave on the first day of the week- and we gather to celebrate this most amazing event! That someone who was dead and entombed rose after 3 days! As the church confesses- He is risen, He is risen indeed! Today we are going to consider why the resurrection is so important. As we read from I Cor. 15- if Jesus Christ is dead- if He died and remained in the grave- then I am leading you astray. My preaching is useless, we are deceived and are liars- and our faith is in vain! We are to be pitied above all men- because our hope in this life is based on nothing but stories and fables. There is no hope for the church and its people- we remain in our sins- and nothing can change that! Trusting in a dead savior is like trying to ride a dead horse- a living dog is better than a dead lion! But Jesus Christ did rise from the grave- He is alive and we do have hope! The fact that lives means joy and good news for the church- because our faith is not in vain. We trust in a Savior who is living and who has conquered death!

We begin in v. 1 where we find that Mary is on her way to the tomb early in the morning. Why is Mary going to the tomb? Well, she is going to put spices on the dead body of her Lord. The first thing we learn about Easter is that the tomb had been full! This may seem self-evident, but it is very important to remember that Mary was not coming to the tomb to rejoice- rather she came in sorrow because her savior and lord had passed away! She did not expect good news- but the smell of death! Easter comes in the context of a tomb that was filled- Jesus had died and was buried! The crucified man was a dead body. The living do not get placed in a crypt- the breathing are not placed in the grave! No- the tomb is for dead people. As the soldiers testified with the spear- as Nicodemus and Joseph applied the ointment and wrapped his body in grave cloths- as the women standing at the foot of the cross all agreed upon- He was dead. And that is where Mary is going- to the tomb of a dead man! This fact is important- because as Rom. 6:23 says- death is the needed payment for sins! Or as QA 40 says- only the death of God's Son could pay for our sins- and this death is exactly what Christ provided! So as I Peter 2 says- Jesus died as our substitute! The full payment for our sins has been paid! Only with the shedding of life blood can there be forgiveness of sins. No blood, no forgiveness as Heb. 9 says.

But as we continue in our text, we find that something strange has taken place! As Mary approaches she finds that the stone which covered the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. And as v. 5 proves- the grave that was once full is now empty. Peter and John come running after Mary has told them the news- and they find that the tomb is indeed missing something- it is missing the dead body of Jesus. Remember the ladies had seen where Jesus was laid- they did not go to the wrong tomb. It was the very same tomb- but it was full of bones no longer! But the tomb is not completely empty- no- in fact they find the burial cloths folded and neatly laying on the shelf. This very fact proves that grave robbers had not stolen the body- because robbers would take the whole body and the grave cloths- not leave the grave cloths folded neatly behind. Nor had the body been moved by the disciples or the gardener. Upon further examination it becomes clear- the body of Jesus is definitely not here! But where is the body of our Lord- where have they brought His corpse? Notice also that they were not expecting a miracle. As v. 2 says- they have taken his body. We don't know where they have put him. We still do not know the answer to this question- where is the body of Jesus? But as we next find out- the reason that the grave cloths are still sitting here is because Jesus no longer needed them. Grave cloths are not fit for a living man! Jesus has shed these old rags as a butterfly sheds its cocoon! As the angels would say to the woman- why are you seeking the living among the dead! If the body was moved- the clothes would have been adjusted or stolen. But here there were laying- in the exact same place and position- but they are hollow and empty! Jesus Christ was now clothed with glory and honor! She was confused and scared. And even after the disciples learn the truth, they still find it too difficult to believe! Although completely necessary and foretold, the followers of Jesus did not expect a resurrection!

But poor Mary will soon find her answer. Where is Jesus- where is his body? What has happened to Him? As we are expressly told in v. 14- Jesus was alive! Jesus was standing there- speaking to the weeping Mary! The fact that Jesus Christ was and is alive was proven and testified by many witnesses. As we find in our passage- Mary saw and spoke with Him face to face- she even grasped and held His feet! The flesh of a living Savior and not a dead corpse! He is alive- a fact that is beyond all doubt! His resurrection is a true, historical event! Everyone except the delusional accept the fact that man has walked on the face of the moon. We believe the first-hand witnesses- although only Neil

Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the only 2 men to actually witness the event. No one doubts its historical accuracy. But with the resurrection of Jesus Christ- we have disciples, this group of women- and as I Cor. 15 says- a group of 500 at the same time! We even have a hostile witness found in Saul of Tarsus- who was forced to admit that Jesus was alive and was the Lord! It is beyond a doubt- the one who was dead is now alive! But we have further proof- found in the fulfillment of God's promise! Easter also means the fulfillment of prophecy. As the disciples testified in v. 9- although they did not understand at that time- the death and resurrection of the Anointed One was promised hundreds of years before it took place. We find in Psalm 16:10- you will not abandon my soul to Sheol- or let your holy one see corruption. Or in Psalm 110- you are a priest forever- He is a never ending priest like Melchizedek! Without beginning or end of days as Heb. 7 explains! So His resurrection was not only witness by men- but promised by God!

Yet there are more benefits of Easter. We know that it took place- but to what end? Why was His resurrection of such necessity- and what benefits do we gain for it? Well, His resurrection from the grave ensures our fellowship and communion with Him. The fact that Christ rose from the dead means that we can and will always have access to God- and God will shower Fatherly love and care on us because our elder Brother- Jesus Christ lives! As LD 17 explains. By way of His resurrection He has overcome death. He makes us share in His righteousness. He lives to distribute His gifts that He won for us by His death. He was raised for our justification as Rom. 4 says. The second benefit in this LD says that He lives so that we might live in Him. His new life now permeates our life- by the Spirit we are being sanctified and conformed into His image. And third benefit is that His resurrection is a promise- a first fruit of our future resurrection. His glorified life a surety of our future glorification since He is one with us and we are one with Him. We could add to this that He lives to intercede for us- pouring out every spiritual blessing upon us from the right hand of His Father!

The final implication of Easter is the connection between His death, resurrection and ascension. As Jesus said to Mary in v. 17- Do not cling to me because I have not yet ascended. The ascension is the necessary outworking of His resurrection- the two cannot be separated! If He rose from the dead- He must ascend into glory and be seated at the right hand of the Father! Now that His sacrifice for our sins

had been completed- the work of redemption had been accomplished. What remains is for that redemption to be applied to His people- a work that would be done when Jesus Christ has ascended into glory! The physical presence of Jesus on earth after His resurrection was only for a time- and Mary had to learn that His body belonged in glory because it had been glorified. Even with Mary's clinging- the body of Jesus would not remain on this earth. But don't forget that this is for our good- He ascended into heaven for our good! As Jesus said in John 14- He went to heaven to prepare a place for us. And from the right hand in glory is the place from which He pours out His Spirit! Here, in glory, Christ is ruling and reigning- blessing His people and preparing a place for them!

To conclude, we have briefly looked at a few benefits of Resurrection Sunday. He rose to prove His power- to testify to us that He had conquered sin, death and hell. The tomb that was full was now empty- the living are not found among the dead! The payment for sins had been made and accepted! Because He lives, we now have peace with God! The fact that He is alive was verified by many witnesses- even the Scriptures foretold and prove this point! The resurrection of Christ is a first fruit of our resurrection as well- the fact that He lives proves our unhindered fellowship and communion with Him! As Rom. 4 says- He was crucified for our sins and raised for our justification! He rose from the grave with a glorified body- and He would soon ascend to the place from which He came! His resurrection meant that He would ascend- and His ascension means that He will come back! The good news of this day is impossible to miss- since He lives we live today and we will live with Him forever! The grave could not hold its prey- and sin and death no longer hold us in its grasp! His body is our bread of life- His blood is our living water! As He continues to live, He also feeds us by His Spirit. We feed on His body and blood- and thus are fed for and now have life eternal! He burst the bars and set His people free- so believe this day! And rejoice that Jesus Christ our Lord was raised from the dead! He is risen, He is risen indeed!