

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran

Sermon by Pastor A. Schultz

April 15, 2012

2nd Sunday of Easter

John 20:19f NASB

Jesus among His Disciples



¹⁹ So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

It was still dark Easter Sunday morning – when I was driving to Church. On North 4th Street – there is a house on the east side of the street. In lights there are two words – **Jesus Lives!** Off to each side – strings of lights – **Jesus Lives!** That’s exactly it! Easter means the Carpenter – the Rabbi – the Lord – the Son of God – lives. Back from the dead – Jesus descended into Hell – in the tradition of the conquering Roman generals – to celebrate his victory. The Apostle Paul wrote about it – in his letter to the believers in Colosse: **¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.** Colossians 2. This Sunday – in the afterglow of Easter we continue to celebrate Jesus’ triumph over death and the grave. Prof. Eickmann – before he went home to Heaven used to say: You dasn’t feel badly if you haven’t flown to Israel – and taken one of those bus tours – where they drive you from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives – south to Bethlehem and north to Nazareth and Capernaum and out into the wilderness – or the forest preserve of En Gedi or Mt.

Carmel. You have seen all those places in the Scriptures. You have been to the empty tomb on the pages of Scripture. You can say with the confidence of a mustard seed of faith:

We Have Seen The Lord!

- 1. He gives us peace**
- 2. He gives us our mission**

As we catch up in spirit with the disciples it's Easter – in the evening. We are reading from the Gospel of the eye-witness John – the disciple Jesus loved. The doors were locked for fear of the Jews. Everyone must have been talking – in little clumps and bunches about what had happened that very morning! Women – Mary Magdalene – out of whom Jesus had cast 7 demons was there – saying she had seen angels. She saw Jesus and thought he was the gardener and asked him – where had he put Jesus' body. Then he said her name – "Mary!" And she knew it was him. He told her not to hang on to him – not to hold his feet so tightly – as if to say – I lost you once – I'm never going to let go of you now! There were Peter and John – racing to the grave. John looked in. Peter went all the way into the tomb – then John too. The strips of linen that were wrapped around Jesus' lifeless body were still there. The napkin that had covered Jesus' face was neatly folded and set to the side. Not what grave robbers would have done. Angels rolled the stone away – in front of Roman soldiers who were scared stiff – to reveal that the grave was now empty – the way you open cupboard doors or pull your pockets inside out to show they are empty! Still some of the disciples didn't know what to think. It's not every day that somebody who was dead and in the grave – suddenly came back. Although God's Word says – **And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.** Matthew 27 Did you remember that? Back from the dead! On Judgment Day it will happen everywhere! Up the hill from my house people will wake up from the dead! Down Juneau Street – many of my Professors will wake up. Their glorified body – one free from any flaw or disability – will be reunited with their soul. They will be whole and strong.

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you..." We have peace – because Jesus died and rose again to save us. One of the blessings we have at our Day School and at Luther Prep and at our Lakeside Lutheran High School is devotions. We take time – make time – again and again to have devotions – worship – time to pray, praise and give thanks as part of our day! People in these schools – teachers and students are sinful people – just like everyone else. But when we sin we have law and gospel. Sins are sins – sometimes painful and hurtful mistakes. And the Gospel is about forgiveness – unconditional and complete! Take this week's chapel. Pastor Gartner talked about the LORD's right hand – his power and authority to conquer sin, the devil and death itself. To illustrate this – Pastor Gartner had three volunteers – each with a sign on their back – sin, the devil and death – small, medium and large – an 8th grader – even taller than him! Then came arm wrestling. Again and again and again – the LORD's right arm has done mighty things. Again and again and again Jesus overpowered all our enemies. The last enemy to be defeated is death! The grave will not hold us. We are triumphant by grace alone. We have peace with God for Jesus' sake!

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." Jesus is sending us out – with the Easter Gospel! That means being a missionary. Before you can tell someone about Jesus – you need to show them by how you live that you are Jesus' students, followers and imitators. Only Jesus can make you strong enough to do that! Take for example a man named Patrick – an avowed atheist down in Athens, Texas. Patrick went after a Christian Church for putting up a nativity scene by the court house. Patrick a taxi cab driver hired a lawyer to make them take down the manger and baby Jesus. People in the church started to pray for Patrick. The other day Patrick found out that he has a detached retina – and has no health insurance to pay for the surgery. So people from the Church started to raise money – to help pay for Patrick's operation. Maybe – if they helped Patrick physically see – he might see spiritually, too – by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Easter Gospel! Patrick didn't think the people of the Church would actually send him their thank-offerings – but they did. Patrick was so moved – he has actually donated a star for the nativity scene. Patrick said this is the first time he has experienced unconditional love from Christians. That's the kind of love Jesus has shown to you and to me. That's the kind of love we need to show one-another!

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." *Receive the Holy Spirit!* When you read your Bible and come to worship and come to Lord's Supper – Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Then come the fruits of faith. Love – for your spouse – for your children and grandchildren – for your neighbor! You will help your neighbor! Like running your weed whacker – around those green boxes in the corner of their yard – or picking up trash as it blows through your neighborhood – or cleaning out the drain in the street – so when it rains – the twigs and leaves don't block it and flood the neighborhood. The fruit of Joy! There's not a lot of joy out there. But you can be joyful! Speak a word of encouragement – to people who are cleaning – like at the hospital – tell them you appreciate how they are keeping the hospital clean! Tell the people who make your sub sandwich they are doing a great job! Salute Felix – the crossing guard – when you see him helping all the St. Mark's and St. John's children get to school safely. Encourage Julie when you see her working to pick up branches and twigs after a wind brought them down! Peace! Don't take the bait when people say things to try and make you angry! Don't be the one to slam doors or make obscene gestures when someone cuts you off when you are driving! If you are nice to the nice and mean to the mean – how are you full of the Holy Spirit. Nice to the nice? Even unbelievers are nice to the nice. Show love to the unlovable – and you will demonstrate by your life – that you are Jesus' student, follower and imitator!

²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Doubting Thomas – was filled with doubt. How can you know? Read your Bible! Read and study God's Word! The more you do – the more sure and certain you will become! Read the Gospel of John. Read the Letter to the Romans. Read the Psalms. Read Isaiah. Read a study Bible – the notes – the explanations – the background! Read a devotion each day. Read a Meditations each day. **Pray without ceasing.** Come to Bible Class where you can ask questions! There is nothing wrong with questions – with

saying, "I don't get it." To ask, "What does this mean?" Come to Church! Come to Lord's Supper. Jesus will bless you with the faith and powerful confidence of a little child who overcomes doubt with humble faith!

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." There was a news story the other day – about people who knew they were dying. Someone asked these people – now that – humanly speaking – their earthly life was ending – if they had regrets? If they were able to live their life over – what would they do differently? Again and again people said – they wish they had lived their life – true to themselves – not pretending to be someone or something that they weren't! The second regret – was working so much! They said – every single man who was dying – regretted spending so much time on the treadmill of work – hours and hours of work to make money to buy things and stuff – instead of spending time doing what was really important. Instead of spending time with their families – with the people they loved! People regretted not expressing their feelings! What does this mean? Do people express their anger? I think so! Do people express their bitterness? Again I think so! Do people say things that are thoughtless and hurtful and rude? I think so! What people seem to fail to do – is tell people they love them. To tell people thank you. To build people up – encouraging them – for their acts of kindness – done to give glory to Jesus! People said they regretted not staying in touch with their friends. That's not easy. You need to take time – make time to write to them – talk to them – spend time with them – go and see them. Again – more precious than the things and stuff Jesus gives you – is the preciousness of friends. You never know when Jesus is going to take those we love home to heaven. When he does – we will have to wait until we are in heaven to see them again. And finally people regretted not letting themselves be happy. This has to do with contentment and with a child like faith and confidence – a trust in your Heavenly Father. In many respects – happiness is a choice. It's a choice to be thankful and content with the time of grace Jesus has given you. A choice to be thankful and content – by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then the words of Scripture can actually come true in your after Easter life. **Be joyful always. Pray continually. Give thanks under all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** God bless you with peace and joy because we have in fact – see the risen Christ. Amen!
To God alone all glory!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz