

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church

Shobonier, Illinois

Easter C

April 20, 2025

Psalm 16; Mark 16:1–8

The Path of Life

You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11 ESV)

Dearly Beloved,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” (Mark 16:3). That’s what the women asked one another that first Easter morn. Their Lord was dead and gone forever – or so they thought. Their trip to the tomb that morning must have been long and lonely. All of the talk about Jesus as the Messiah seemed cold and dead on their lips. Still, they wanted to do what was right. They wanted to bring the spices and anoint His body. If He could not live, at least He should be buried with honor and respect as a great teacher.

Beloved, we all fight this battle with death. Sometimes the battle seems to be going well. We’re healthy, the kids are doing okay, and tax season is over. God is gracious, and there is much to rejoice about. Other times, though, it seems as though death and Satan are winning. A loved one dies. There’s a sickness that just won’t go away, and sometimes grows worse. The economy. Jobs. School. Divorce. Fighting at home. Sometimes the fight is long and the battle hard. Sometimes this earthly strife never seems to end. It can feel as though there is no future, no hope for things to ever get better.

We, of course, are not the first Christians to have this battle with Satan and sin and death. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 about those who weren't certain of the resurrection of the dead. They didn't know whether the dead would rise. They thought you lived and you died, and that was the end. To address that fear and concern he wrote: "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19).

So, how often have you been miserable because you have forgotten the most basic, fundamental core of the Christian faith? How often have you lived as if Jesus' dead body were still decaying in a tomb outside of Jerusalem? When we allow the trials and crosses of this life to define us, it is as if we are asking that question with the women at the tomb. I don't mean that we should always be happy and have a smile on our face, or that if we simply have a more positive attitude, things will automatically get better. Heaven knows that there are times when things are hard. We do suffer in this life. And that suffering is real; it is painful; and it may feel as though it will never end.

But Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And for poor, weak sinners like you and me that is good news indeed. In fact, it is the very best of news. David exclaimed this when he prayed,

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:10–11).

The path that we walk this day is the path of life through death. There is no such thing as life for us apart from Jesus' death and resurrection. But with Christ, there is hope; there is certainty. This hope is not a pie-in-the-sky sort of everything-will-get-better hope. No, God grounds this hope upon Jesus' death and resurrection for us. Again, David prayed, "I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from You.' "

But what if you believe this path is not for you? What if you believe that Jesus' death and resurrection are not enough, or that you are not worthy of God? To you I say remember St. Paul. Untimely born, out of step with the other apostles, if anyone would have a claim on being unworthy of God's mercy, it would be Paul. He was a persecutor, a murderer by nearly anyone's

standards, or the least of the apostles, as he would call himself (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet God had mercy on him, baptized him, and made him His own child.

This is true for you too, dearly Beloved. Everything you have and are, all of the good you have, is from God Himself, who gave Himself to you so that you might have hope. He gives Himself to you so that you can actually live, not just survive to suffer another day. This is what we pray in the catechism:

That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. (Small Catechism, Second Article)

We have talked a lot about forgiveness this Lent. We've talked about our need for forgiveness, the destructive effect sin has on our lives, and we have talked about how sin begets more sin all the time. But more important than that, we have heard how God forgives, that He longs to forgive, that His forgiveness covers you, and that His gracious presence in your life is but a foretaste of an eternity of fellowship in Him.

So rejoice and be glad. The things of this life that weigh you down will pass. God is at peace with you, and you do not need to be afraid of anything that comes your way. Jesus is risen, and that is all that really matters in this life. For our Lord Jesus who died for you has risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. And that's certainly something to celebrate.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! HE is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(From God's Gift of Forgiveness from CPH)

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener