

Easter Sunday – Late

April 15, 2017

St. Mark 16:1-8

Christ's Resurrection is the World's Absolution

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In the Risen Christ, dear festive guests,

Today is just another Sunday. What? How can that be? There are present some faces we do not often see. People are dressed up a bit more than usual. Excited enthusiastic singing and instrumental music fill the air.

Easter is just another Sunday because every Sunday is the celebration of Jesus' bodily resurrection from death. There is no more joyful celebration than Sunday worship and its message, "He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him." Or, as the hymn writer penned, "Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o'er his foes."

Easter Sunday, cloned we might say in worship every Sunday morning, is the celebration that Jesus fulfilled his work. Jesus reached the end of his walk on the road of the world's redemption. He obtained all glory from his Father.

Christ's Resurrection Declares the World's Absolution. This valuable gift is for you. Faith receives the valuable gift.

Jesus' mission in life was to do his Father's will. He said "my food is to do the will of him who sent me." [John 4:34] His Father's will was that his Son suffer and die not for his own sins, but for your sins and mine. And not only for ours but for the sins of the entire world. To that end, God the Father in his counsel and foreknowledge gave his Son over into the hands of unrighteous men.

On his cross, Jesus paid the temporal and eternal penalty for all those sins as the only qualified Substitute. Since this all-inclusive sin of billions of people is the cause of Jesus' suffering and death, then what is the all-inclusive meaning of his resurrection for those billions?

Let's narrow the field a bit. Each of you is one of those billions. Does the Bible exclude you from the sin that brought Jesus' death? No. Therefore, the Father does not exclude you from Jesus' work of redemption and the absolution Christ's resurrection declares. This valuable gift is for you.

On Pentecost, Peter declared, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge...but God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to hold him." [Acts 2:23,24]

When a judge sets you free after you have paid your fine, he is declaring your account settled. God the Father freed Jesus from death to declare your account to him settled. Jesus paid in full to the last sin every debt and punishment you and I and all sinners owed the holy God.

Each and every Sunday, the called servant of Christ by Christ's authority announces the absolution after we have confessed our sins. Without Easter Sunday that would be an empty promise. Christ's resurrection declares the world's absolution. This valuable gift is for you.

St. Paul assures us in his letter to the Romans, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." [5:18]

In Christ, the Father has forgiven all your sins. Christ is who makes the gospel the power of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He is the assurance of the general absolution. Christ is the power of the private use of the keys to forgive when I my neighbor says to me, "I have sinned against you." Christ's resurrection is the world's absolution. Faith receives this valuable gift.

Martin Luther used the example of a king giving you a castle. If you do not believe it is now yours, that does not make the king a liar, nor is it his fault you were not interested. You have deceived yourself and it is your fault. The king certainly gave it. Such is the gift of justification, the general absolution God has pronounced on the world through Christ's resurrection. God has forgiven the sins of all people but not all people are saved.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Do not merely glance at the wondrous Easter gift of Jesus’ empty tomb and then pass by in apathy. Take the angels’ words to heart. The opposite of that means not to look at every Sunday like Easter Sunday. Every Sunday is the time to look intently into Jesus’ empty tomb and from outside of it hear the risen Christ speak the powerful and comforting absolution, “I forgive you all your sins.”

Faith alone saves because faith is the hand that grasps Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead which declares our debt to God paid in full. Trust that the absolution God the Father pronounced on the entire world two thousand years ago is your valuable gift. God is faithful and his gift is irrevocable.

The Eternal King has given you the perfect castle in the kingdom of God. God has set a place for you in his Father’s house in heaven. Christ’s resurrection is your invitation written in Jesus’ blood to your seat at “the wedding supper of the lamb.” [Rev. 19:9]

Receive in faith Christ’s resurrection that is the world’s absolution. The Spirit will fill your hearts with the greatest joy and consolation Easter brings. You will see the glory of God. Your death will be the gateway into everlasting life.

Amen. <SDG>