

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 421, 04-04-2021 † Easter Dawn

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

PSALM 30

A psalm. A song for the dedication of the Temple. By David. ¹I will exalt you, O LORD, because you lifted me up. You did not let my enemies rejoice over me. ²O LORD my God, I cried out to you, and you healed me. ³LORD, you snatched my life from the grave. You kept me alive so I did not go down into the pit. ⁴Make music to the LORD, you his favored ones, and give thanks when you remember his holiness, ⁵for we spend a moment under his anger, but we enjoy a lifetime in his favor. In the evening, weeping comes to stay through the night, but in the morning, there is rejoicing! ⁶But I—I said in my security, “I will never be knocked down.” ⁷LORD, in your favor you made strength stand like a mountain for me. Then you hid your face. I was terrified. ⁸To you, O LORD, I call. To the Lord I cry for mercy: ⁹“What gain is there in shedding my blood, in sending me down to destruction? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your truth? ¹⁰LORD, hear and be merciful to me. LORD, be a helper for me.” ¹¹You turned my mourning into dancing. You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, ¹²so that my whole being may make music to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I thank you forever.



Easter! In every part of the world, with joy and gladness, the Christian Church celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It only makes sense to rejoice triumphantly over Christ’s resurrection, because in that resurrection is the pardoning of all sinners.

God the Father laid all the world’s sins on Him, and He died in our sins. But raising Jesus Christ from the dead, the Father pardoned Him; and the pardon was not actually for Him, but rather those in whose guilt Jesus died. As the death of Jesus Christ was the atonement for the world’s sin, so His resurrection was the pardoning of the whole world.

Now there’s nothing left to be done but to make known the pardon to everyone, so that every sinner may believe it and enjoy it. The Lord thought about that, too. He commissioned His apostles to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature. What is the gospel? It isn’t a code of laws and commands; it

is God's Word of pardon to sinners. So the word now is, "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.*" Anyone and everyone taking the Word of pardon by simple faith has forgiveness of sins and is an heir to all the riches of God.

Such a dramatic reversal. From law codes and death to pardon and life, God has given us reasons to get our hopes up and sing,

Alleluia! Jesus Lives

Our psalm for consideration was written 1,000 years before Jesus Christ by the pen of King David. We consider that David wrote it in his old age, because it was a song for the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. However, David wasn't allowed to live that long. His son, Solomon, built the temple.

Maybe David wrote this psalm on the off-chance God would let him live to see the temple built. Maybe after David's death the words were re-purposed for the dedication of the temple. Either way, the words can apply to more than one occasion, and they seem incredibly fitting for Easter, don't they?

The words of this psalm are all about drastic reversals. Silence turns into praise, sorrow turns into joy, but first Death is changed into life.

The enemies of God did not have a chance to rejoice over the death of Jesus too long, did they? If King David's scenario was life-**threatening**, the scenario for Jesus, King of kings, was life-**killing**. But on Easter morning, the Church awoke to find that the devastation of our race—by death itself—had suddenly been undone by our Lord's victorious resurrection.

I can't tell you why you came here. Maybe you came for big answers to deep questions. Maybe you came without expectations, just happy to be at church on Easter and see what we are doing this year. Maybe you were thirsty for this day, because your life has taken plenty of hits lately. Or maybe you came just to see what your Christian friends do on Easter.

I can tell you this; believers in Jesus Christ cannot expect a pain-free life. Not here on this earth. Troubles will come and hurt us, even deeply. Death, our greatest enemy, looms over us. Yet in every trouble, believers recognize the hand of God at work. Deep down, we realize that an unfavorable stressor, grief, sorrow, or pain does not threaten our fundamental security with God. Our distress drives us back to God.

When we are driven back to God, we may realize how often we tend to make our afflictions harder. When we assume that a particular bad situation will never change, our own attitudes can make a bad thing worse. In reality, as the psalmist says, our troubles are like overnight guests (v. 4) that disappear with the sunrise. Even if they should remain with us for several years on this earth, our troubles are “*light and momentary*” (2 Cor. 4:17) in comparison with the eternal glory that awaits us.

There was purpose in the death of Jesus, and that was not to simply be a sad story. Mythologies of Jesus Christ from other cultures have gods who are put to death. They have gods with a resurrection, but there is never a purpose to those deaths and resurrections beyond a tragic event worth mourning. Our God is different. He was really put to death, but there was a gain in shedding His blood and sending Him down to destruction. It was to save the lives of many and share the gift of resurrection.

Today we recognize that fatal flaw in death: The living God has returned to life! Life returned in Jesus’ body, for death had no power over Him. Life will return for those who trust in Him, too.

So the words of this psalm are all about drastic reversals. What seems awful changed suddenly, unexpectedly. Sadness described as “mourning” or “wailing” has suddenly turned to spontaneous dancing! Something quite fitting for the rising of the Son of God, don’t you think? Or consider the sackcloth banner we had for the season of repentance known as “Lent”: The sackcloth of Lent is gone and we now wear clothes of joy. Not only that, but it was God who has removed that sackcloth and exchanged it with threads of finery and garments of celebration. Again, a drastic reversal comes through a quiet silence, the hesitation and long pauses of death. But now, we can’t help but speak and sing of what we have heard and seen!

Our *Kyries* have turned into *Alleluias*; our “Lord, have mercy”s have turned into, “Praise the Lord”s; and our death has turned into life, because He lives! Christ is risen; He is risen indeed! *Alleluia!* Jesus lives. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.