

Last Sunday of End Times Christ the King – November 26, 2017
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23) But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24) Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27) For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28) When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

In the name of our living Lord and King, dear friends:

**1) Alleluia! Jesus lives! He is now the living one;
From the gloomy house of death Forth the conqueror has gone,
Bright forerunner to the skies
Of his people, yet to rise.**

**3) Jesus lives! Why do you weep? Why that sad and frequent sigh?
He who died our Brother here Lives our Brother still on high,
Lives forever to bestow
Blessings on his Church below.**

This Easter hymn helps us to understand our text for today. Today is the final Sunday of the Church year. The suggested Scriptures for today encourage us to reflect on the fact that Jesus is our living Lord and King. The Bible says that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. Christ is now described as ruling over all things for the benefit of his church. (*cf. Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20-22*)

In a sense, we can say that Jesus' resurrection marked the beginning of his rule as King of all things and so today, we have an opportunity to consider an Easter text – without all of the potential distractions that surround a typical Easter celebration. Our text assures us:

Theme: **Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!**

- 1) The resurrection of Christ guarantees our own resurrection (20-23)
- 2) The resurrection of Christ guarantees us eternal protection from our enemies (24-26)

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23) But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

A number of years ago I heard a report of a scientific study that concluded that all human beings have a common ancestor. Although those results aren't surprising for anyone who believes what the Bible says about the origins of man they were contrary to what is commonly taught in schools today. We realize that we are closely connected to Adam. We speak of him as the father of all. Not only can we trace our genetic structure back to Adam, we can also trace our sinful nature back to him. In Romans 5:12 we read: **sin entered the**

world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... (NIV)

You and I were born as sinners – our minds were hostile to God. Our hearts were filled with sinful desires which prompt our sinful actions. (Matthew 15:19) **For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.** (NIV)

It is because we have all inherited a sinful nature from Adam that we must all confess: (Romans 7:15, 18, 21) **I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out...So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.** (NIV)

It is because of our relationship with Adam that a relationship with Jesus Christ is of the utmost importance. And God made this relationship possible! (Galatians 4:4-5) **(Galatians 4:4-5 NIV) (4) But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.** (NIV)

The Holy Son of God willingly became one of us so that he could set us free from the law and its curse. He set us free from the law by keeping it perfectly for us. He set us free from the curse of the law by suffering eternal death for us. He came to destroy the work of the Devil and to restore a fallen human race into a perfect relationship with God. It was God's plan that his creation should love and serve him for all eternity – through faith in Jesus we now look forward to such a life.

Paul reminds us in Romans 6:3 **don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (5) For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.** (NIV)

Because so much is at stake for us, Paul assures us in our text that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Our life in this world is not the perfect life that God intended for us and that Jesus has made possible for us once again. Our human nature still clings to us – temporal death is a reality for us. But this need not trouble us because **But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23) But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.** (NIV)

In our summer gardens, it always seems that there are one or two tomatoes that ripen before all the others. Those first tomatoes are the first fruits – they are an indication that more are on the way. Jesus' resurrection is an indication that death has been conquered. Jesus' resurrection assures us of our own resurrection. This text reminds us that our resurrection will be closely connected with Christ's eternal rule. When Christ comes at the end of time those who belong to him will be raised to eternal life. Just as those first tomatoes tell me to get ready to enjoy many more – so Christ's resurrection tells us to get ready to enjoy many more resurrections including our own.

Christ's resurrection guarantees that our physical or temporal death is but a sleep as the beloved hymn, *Asleep in Jesus* (CW 605) reminds us:

Asleep in Jesus! Blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep,
A calm and undisturbed repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes.

Asleep in Jesus! Oh, how sweet
To be for such a slumber meet,
With holy confidence to sing
That death has lost his venom'd sting!

Asleep in Jesus! Peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest;
No fear, no woe, shall dim that hour
That manifests the Savior's pow'r.

Theme: **Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!**

- 1) The resurrection of Christ guarantees our own resurrection (20-23) and
- 2) The resurrection of Christ guarantees us eternal protection from our enemies (24-26)

The glorious day of the resurrection will signal the final destruction of all our enemies as our text tells us. **24) Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** (NIV)

These verses offer us a tremendous blessing – although Jesus has indeed defeated Satan and all his enemies, those enemies will still resist and struggle against him until their final destruction and punishment at the last day.

As we go through life; we will also be confronted and challenged by Christ's enemies. Satan will scowl, fierce. He'll prowl around as a lion seeking whom he may devour. Yet we don't need to fear him. He's judged – he can harm us none.

The world, at this time, is still filled with enemies of Christ who seek to lead us astray. They seem to have a certain measure of power and authority – for example think of those who promote unproven theories as facts in the science textbooks in our public schools. Or what about those who belittle the Christian who believes in creation? Or consider those who have sought to undermine the sanctity of life and marriage.

Anytime our Christian values and principals come into conflict with the values and morals of our society or anytime the teachings of Scripture are called into question or we are encouraged to compromise our beliefs – we are seeing evidence of Christ's enemies struggling. But their struggle is ultimately in vain – Christ is indeed risen from the dead and ultimately all of these enemies will be placed under his eternal rule.

Until that time, Christ will use his rule over all things to protect and shield his Church. His Word and Sacrament will enable us to see the truth, to fight for the truth and to resist the lies of the enemy.

The Apostle Paul urges us to use the weapons the Lord provides in our struggles with the confidence that Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of eternal victory over all our foes. (Ephesians 6:10-17) **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (11) Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (13) Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil**

comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (14) Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, (15) and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (16) In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (NIV)

When our text speaks of our enemies it makes special mention of the fact that on the Last Day even death will be defeated – it will be no more.

We anxiously look forward to the end of all the enemies who have threatened us and who try to dominate us – the end of Satan, the end of sin, the end of death, the end of all misery. For us the end will mark the beginning – the beginning of joy, blessedness and eternal life with Christ when as John tells us: there will be **no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**

Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection to eternal life. May his resurrection also encourage us and comfort us always as it guarantees us eternal protection from our enemies . Amen.

**1) Alleluia! Jesus lives! He is now the living one;
From the gloomy house of death Forth the conqueror has gone,
Bright foreruner to the skies
Of his people, yet to rise.**

**3) Jesus lives! Why do you weep? Why that sad and frequent sigh?
He who died our Brother here Lives our Brother still on high,
Lives forever to bestow
Blessings on his Church below.**

(CW 153)