

Pastor Shaun Arndt
April 12, 2020
Sermon Text – Matthew 28:1-10
Resurrection Sunday

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Dear friends in Christ, the Risen Lord,

To say that our world is hurting right now is an understatement. Many are sick. Many have died. Lives have been turned upside down everywhere.

A cloud of fear you can practically feel hangs over everything. Fear for loved ones. Fear for the economy, fear of making ends meet. Fear of how long this will all last. Fear our leaders have done too little or done too much. Fear of isolation, sickness, the fear of death. Yes, our world is hurting.

But even if the virus and all its damage were gone this very day, still all would not be right with this world. For even when this virus is gone, there will still be fear and trouble. There will still be cancer, earthquakes, famines, wars and rumors of wars. There will still be political strife and backbiting, broken hearts and broken relationships.

We might be extra aware of death stalking our land right now, yet even when this virus is gone death will still be on the prowl just as the old hymn puts it: *Grim death pursues me all the way...nowhere I rest securely...a failing breath and I in death's strong grasp may lie to face eternity today.*

There is a reason for this: fear and death are the result of sin. We are sinful, imperfect people living in a sinful, imperfect world. A world sunk in fear and death ever since our first parents rebelled against God.

We, their children, still follow in their footsteps, straying off after what we want for ourselves instead of what our Good and Holy God says is right. The proof we are sinners who deserve God's judgment is the fact we die.

Perhaps one good God has worked from this crisis is that maybe it has woken us up a bit more to what is true both in good times as well bad: that we are helpless, we are vulnerable, we don't have the control over things we like to think we have. We need help. We need a Savior.

And dear friends, this day, Easter Day is the day the LORD has made, the day He shows us He has given us exactly what we need. We find it in the message the women heard that first Easter morning, the message God wrote down for you and me to hear this very day, the message that guarantees: **No More Fear.**

It is the unmistakable message of Easter. We hear it in the introduction of the first Easter Sermon preached by an angel to the women at the tomb: **"Do not be afraid!"** We hear it again from the lips of the Risen Jesus as He meets those same women: **Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid."**

It was also said on the other end of Jesus' life, when the angel announced to Mary that she would be the virgin mother of the Son of God as He takes on our humanity: **The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid."** The night of Jesus' birth, the angel told it to the shepherds: **"Do not be afraid. For behold I bring you good news of great joy."**

Just as fear, sin and death all go together, so Jesus and **Do not be afraid** go together! And here's why: "...**you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, just as he said.**"

Jesus **was crucified**. He died and was buried. Sin is the reason people die. Only Jesus was the sinless one—the Holy God and the perfect Man in one indivisible person. He came to replace our imperfection with His holiness, our sinful chasing after what God says is wrong with His own pure and perfect life.

And yet Jesus died, because He took the punishment for our every sin. Jesus let the guilt, the separation from God our sin deserved fall upon Him instead of us. He suffered hell and then death when He was **crucified**, so great was His love to save us.

But He is dead no longer. The angel rolled the stone away to show that Christ's body had returned to life. He had taken up His power and glory and left the guarded tomb! In awesome irony, the very soldiers who were supposed to guarantee there could be no resurrection, they now became the first witnesses to the irrefutable truth that Christ is risen indeed!

And what does this mean for us? It means our sin is gone, for Jesus took it on himself and took it away. His resurrection from the dead is the proof positive all our sins, all our wrongs have been paid for in full. You are forgiven.

The risen Lord says so: "**Do not be afraid. Go, tell my brothers...**" Here Jesus was talking about the Apostles, who had all said they would all die rather than desert Him. But instead, they fell asleep when He asked them to watch and pray. They all ran away when He was arrested. They all forgot His promise to rise from the dead and now were cowering behind locked doors.

So what does Jesus call them? Bums? Ingrates? Wretched sinners? Disappointing disciples? No! He calls them **brothers**. He calls them family and fellow heirs of God's everlasting joys. This is the result of cross and empty tomb! **No more fear...** from sin.

And this is also for you and me! No matter your flaws, no matter your failures, no matter what guilt you carry with you this day, Christ died for you. He forgave you. He calls you to a brand new life of forgiveness as you trust in Him.

In the book of Psalms and Hebrews as well as elsewhere He calls all who trust in Him His brothers and sisters. In the book of Galatians, He says we are God's children, who in Baptism were clothed with Christ and all the results of His saving work! That means **No more fear** from sin!

Jesus himself teaches us there is really only one thing to be afraid of, and that is God, for God has every right to condemn us to everlasting hell for our sin.

But since God the Father sent His Son for us, since Jesus, true God, paid for our sins on the cross, since Jesus says you are His brothers and sisters through faith in Him, since that means God is on your side, then there is nothing left to fear, not even death.

"Do not be afraid...He has risen, just as he said." Now death is the one needs to be afraid! For Jesus our brother conquered **death's** true power for us.

Yes, our bodies will still die, but Jesus will take our souls home to His Father's mansion and at the last day He will raise our bodies to perfect life as well. Those who trust in Christ have a life that death cannot end or even harm.

You can trust this and every other promise Jesus gives, like when He says He will use all things for our ultimate, eternal good, and yes all things includes Coronavirus.

Jesus said many times that He would die and then rise from the dead, and it happened **just as He said**. Since He has the power and the love to keep that promise He will keep every other promise He gives you. Have **No more fear** as you listen to Jesus.

Now I'm not saying that if you trust in Christ you will never again struggle with fear this side of heaven. Consider the women on Easter morning! They heard the angel, they saw the empty grave clothes lying there, and it still says **they hurried away from the tomb, with fear and great joy**.

Just like you and me, they still had a sinful nature and weakness that left them grappling with fear. But Jesus came to them to take their fears away with still more evidence of His Easter victory as He stood before them alive to speak His spirit and life words: **Do not be afraid**.

And guess what? Jesus still does the same for you and me to help us as we are surrounded by fear of every kind. He may not appear visibly to us, but He still truly comes to us to calm our fears as He meets us in the gospel promises of Bible, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Word and Sacrament, Jesus the Risen Lord stands before us to speak His spirit and life words that have the power to give what they say: **Do not be afraid**.

Finally the day will come when we will get to live these words Jesus spoke that first Easter: **"...there they will see me."** We will not see Jesus in Galilee, but we *will see* Him in the same way Job confessed He would see Jesus at the resurrection:

I know that my Redeemer lives...even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God...I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him.

On that day, when Jesus makes all things new, then you too will see Him with your own risen eyes. With every fiber of your being you will experience Jesus' victory over sin and death and there will be no more sickness, no more sorrow or death, **No More Fear**. Amen.

But now this is what the LORD says, Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine...I will be with you. Amen.