

SYNOD SERMON

Luke 24.1-12, Easter, Yr C

4/20/25, Synod Sermon

INTRO:

Dear Siblings in Christ, I greet you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I'm Bishop Timothy Graham, called to serve the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I also bring greetings from our Synod Staff.

This is our synod's sermon for EASTER Sunday, April 20th, 2025.

GREETING

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

P In the name of ✠ the One
who was, who is, and who is to come. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray: God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

P The gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other

women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

P This is the gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

BISHOP'S SONG: BECAUSE HE LIVES

God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus;
He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

Chorus

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!

And then one day, I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain;
And then, as death gives way to vict'ry,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives! (Chorus)

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, our King, when we see your resurrected face, we imagine a glow a million times brighter than the sun! Death still brings darkness into our lives, but today we celebrate your victory over the finality of death and the eternal promise that one day we will lay at your throne. Now I pray that you are the words I speak, and may they bring you the honor and glory you alone deserve! In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

SERMON

The following is an old preacher's story. One day, a teacher asked her fourth-grade students to name the greatest living human. The responses were immediate, varied, and filled with enthusiasm! A boy raised his hand and remarked, "I think it's Patrick Mahomes." Another student yelled, "No! It's Tom Brady!" One boy exclaimed, "Alex Ovechkin (O-vech'-kin) because he passed Wayne Gretzky's record." A girl sounded in, "It's Taylor Swift." Another girl added,

"I think it's Simone Biles!" The classroom buzzed with energy as kids excitedly named celebrity after celebrity.

Then, it was little Johnny's turn, and everyone looked at him. Without hesitation, he replied, "I think it's Jesus because he loves everyone and is always there to help!" The teacher smiled and said, "I like your answer, Johnny. However, I asked for the greatest living person, and Jesus lived nearly two thousand years ago. Do you have someone else in mind?" To this, Johnny offered a heartfelt response: "Oh no, teacher, that's not right! Jesus is alive! He has risen!"

One could argue that the most wonderful affirmation of the Church is the joyful truth that Jesus Christ is risen and alive- today, every day, and always, right up until the end of time, forever and ever!

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C **Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!**

That's the message of Easter.

In today's scripture, the women approached the tomb, carrying fragrant oils and spices, filled with anticipation and sadness. However, upon arriving, they were surprised to discover that the stone sealing the entrance had been rolled away. It's remarkable to think about Jesus reminding us how stones can witness! This stone was quite large! They stood there in awe, trying to comprehend the scene before them. Suddenly, they noticed two men in shining white garments standing beside them while their eyes gently searched the tomb for Jesus. One of the men asked them, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" "He isn't here; he has risen!"

Then they ask the million-dollar question! Don't you remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee? ⁷ That the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Even as the women ran to tell the others, it was still hard for them to believe!

For the disciples, the mission and everything they passionately believed in for those three exciting years felt like it had come to a heartbreaking end with the loss of their beloved teacher, Jesus. It's truly a tough time! His once-thriving following, which had inspired thousands, now seemed to have shrunk to a handful of close friends from his inner circle. Many were discouraged, feeling this was just another setback. Some returned to their homes, while others were

hiding from the Romans. And only the women ventured out to the tomb, as no one would question them being there.

They witnessed Jesus' amazing resurrection! The others would soon experience this joy, too. Still, it was a bit hard to grasp and take in. They were trying to figure out how to move forward. For now, they chose to stay in their room, sharing in their grief, until the time of Pentecost arrived.

When we go through loss and grief, along with disappointment and decline, it can feel like all we see is death around us. But here's the wonderful news: the message of the resurrection is still relevant today, reminding us that Jesus is alive!

While our past, traditions, religion, structures, and even hierarchies and rules may seem significant, none of these will matter on resurrection day. In fact, they might feel like tombs that remind us of how things used to be, but today, Jesus brings us a beautiful reminder: this is not the end of our story! In fact, it's only the beginning!

God has done something truly spectacular that we could hardly imagine or believe is real! God can bring life from dry bones, buds from barren trees, and new growth from seeds that seemed lost. This resurrection life springs forth from what once felt like a weary and tortured body! This is the very essence of who God is- our amazing Life Giver.

God set life into motion and can bring forth new life at any moment.

God established the cosmos and can reshape that universe in whatever way brings delight!

Today, we joyfully celebrate not only Jesus's resurrection but also our own rebirths in baptism. Today, the risen and crucified Christ is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread. Today is a time for fresh beginnings, exciting new opportunities, revitalized hope, and the beautiful truth that God's church is ever-evolving—though it may change form, leaders, and locations, it never truly ends. So, let's rejoice, people of God!

"Don't look for the living among the dead!"

Remember what God has told us and promised in and through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of Humanity.

He has risen! And so will we!

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray the words you have taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

The Triune God,
who was, who is, and who is to come,
Sovereign, ✠ Savior, and Spirit,
light your way with resurrection dawn,
now and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

P Go in peace. In Christ you are made new. Alleluia! Alleluia!

C **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Wishing everyone a blessed Easter!