

Easter Sunday 4/5/2026
Matthew 28:1-10 A

“HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE HAS RISEN”

In the early part of the last century, before the Communists seized control of Russia, it had been a long-established custom for relatives and friends to exchange the customary Easter greeting, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” After the Communist Revolution, an unnamed priest once availed himself of this usage to win a debate. What happened was this: A Communist commissar for education delivered a public lecture in a large Moscow auditorium. In keeping with the belief of communism, he said that the Christian religion was now completely overthrown and that the Bible could be easily disproved. He felt so sure of himself that he challenged anyone in the audience to find a flaw in what he had just presented to them.

At his invitation, a young priest came forward, turned to the audience, and said, in Russian of course, the usual Easter greeting, "Christ is risen!" With one accord the vast audience cried out with the customary Easter reply, "He is risen indeed!" "I have finished," said the priest. "I have no more to say." The meeting was closed at once. The communist leader's eloquence and flowery language had availed him nothing.

My Dear Christian Friends, the world today holds the resurrection of Christ as meaningless, a cute story, some even hold it in contempt. Some of will even speak of the "myth" of the Resurrection, contending the disciples made up the whole story.

These are lies of the devil. This Easter morning, we rejoice and sing that the grave is empty. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In our Gospel lesson, the women found the truth of the resurrection. On that first Easter morning, in the early hours of daylight, the women came to the tomb. Because our Savior's lifeless body was buried in haste on Friday, it was not given the proper burial anointings. So, the women were bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus.

Which raises the question -- what did they expect to find there? They were ready to stand over Jesus' lifeless body, to weep, to mourn, to cry out. They were ready to feel the sting of death. They were ready to say their sad good-byes.

But, when they got to the tomb, what they found and saw alarmed them, because it was far different than what they expected.

The Evangelist tells us,

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it (vv. 1-2).

They expected to find death. But, they did not find Jesus' lifeless body. Instead, the angel said to them, *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said (vv. 5-6).*

Isn't it ironic! They expected to find death, and they found life.

Perhaps, the reason humanity is so quick to believe the lie of the devil that there is no resurrection, perhaps the reason the women expected to find the lifeless body of Jesus is because, every day of earthly life, death has us surrounded.

There is a great lie of the devil we hear in our world today. And it goes like this: Death is a natural part of life. What a lie that is, My Christian

Friends. I saw that to you because the book of Genesis tells us God did not create us to die. In fair Eden's Garden, He made a mudpie and breathed His very, eternal life into it, *and the man became a living creature (Ge 2:7)*. And the Creator put that man in Eden, the perfect home He had created for us; to enjoy the gift of life He had given to us forever and ever, without end.

Death came because of sin. The day our first parents ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden, death fell upon us and all creation. Now, daily obituaries fill our newspapers as a stark reminder to us of the truth of God's Word, *death spread to all men because all sinned (Ro 5:12)*.

In the fall of Adam and Eve, you and I and all humanity fell under the power of that fearful, body and soul-destroying tyrant. That tyrant is sin. Sin has changed the paradise of Eden into a vale of tears.

Sin grants us only one reward -- death. According to God's law, the wages of sin is death, not merely the death of our mortal bodies, but spiritual death, the eternal death of hell (cf. Ro 6:23).

Death is our great enemy. And, we can do nothing to escape it or free ourselves from its vile clutches.

But, we can rejoice and sing because God is love. In His love for us, God did not want us to be destroyed by death. So, in love, He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to free us from captive death.

God sent His only begotten Son into this sin-enslaved world, and laid on Him the is of all the world. God's won Son carried the sin of the world and that sin condemned Him, nailed Him to the cross, killed Him, and, at last, buried His lifeless body in the grave. On that Good Friday, as the darkness of our worship this past Friday reminded us, it appeared as though the all-destroying tyrant, sin, had swallowed up and conquered

even our Savior from sin. But, no, this day we celebrate that the grave is empty.

His work completed, Christ did not remain in the grave. On the 3rd day, Christ rose in victory from the grave.

Sin, death, and hell have been conquered by Christ. Sin has forever lost its power to accuse, torment, and condemn us poor sinners because “Death has been swallowed up in victory,” the victory of the Easter resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Easter resurrection of Christ is so important and comforting to us because it proves that we will rise to eternal life in Christ. *“I am the resurrection and the life,”* Jesus said. *“Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26).*

Yes, baring the long-expected return of our Lord, one day, we will breathe our last and our eternal souls will depart our mortal bodies. Yet, we have nothing to fear, for even in death, we live. Yes, our bodies will return to the dust from which they came. But, immediately at death, the soul of the Christian believer is in heaven with the Lord. Our bodies will be laid to rest, to await the day of the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day. On that most wondrous of days that our Lord returns in all His glory, and all who are in the dust of the earth will hear His voice and rise. Then, our eternal souls will be reunited to our glorified bodies and we will live in heaven with God forever and ever, without end.

Yes, we will be forever with the Lord. With Job, we can confidently sing,

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh

I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart faints with me! (19:25-27).

Join me this morning in that joyous Easter greeting that reverberated even through the halls of a communist auditorium. Join me in that confession that took martyrs joyfully to their grave. Join me in that confession that sustains the battle-wearied souls of the faithful in fighting the good fight of the faith. Join me in that confession that comforts the dying in their mortal anguish. Join me in that confession that gives strength to mourners to face the days of earthly life without their loved ones. Join me in that confession that assures us of the forgiveness of sins and the victory of the cross.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!