

Sermon April 16, 2017 – Easter Sunrise Service

## Commandment One

Mark 16:1–8 and John 20:1–18



Dear friends in Christ,

In the First Commandment, God forbids us from having any other gods than him. We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things. Because he wants, he desires to be God for us! For our benefit!

God says: “You shall have no other gods.”

In fact, there is no other God than the man Jesus, the Christ, and on this Easter day, we are so glad that Jesus Christ, God in the flesh is back to life, he

is risen. He is risen indeed!! And we are thankful that we are his disciples, here gathered today to celebrate his victory over death, sin and satan. This is good news! It is news worthy of great celebration.

### **I. There is no hope in a dead Jesus . . . dead and buried.**

But, imagine this for a moment, what if, what if you were a disciple back then, a Peter, or John, or Mary? I’m sure things your understanding or your perception of what happened might have had a different tone, a different outcome.

For starters, I’m sure, if you were there back then, you would have had such high hopes in him. Jesus was everything to you. You followed him because you believed he was the Messiah, the promised Savior. He did things only God could do. He said words only God could possibly say. This always amazed you, many times to the point of absolute fear. You were there when he healed a paralytic and forgave his sins. It amazed everyone (Mk 2:12). When he stilled the storm, you were terrified and asked one another: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41)

You were astonished and absolutely amazed when he brought Jairus’s dead daughter back to life (Mark 5:42) and when he walked on the water (Mark 6:51). On the mountain, his appearance changed, transfigured; you were scared (Mark 9:6). Could he be . . . ? Of course he is! But then he went and preached a scandalous sermon series about insistently heading up to Jerusalem.

He had something, actually an obsession for Jerusalem. Nothing could change his mind. Three times he boldly and audaciously proclaimed that he’d be . . . handed over to the religious leaders. He will be spit upon! Relentlessly ridiculed! If that wasn’t bad enough, he resolutely promised that he’d be put on death row, flogged, and killed. Then he said something about rising on, on the third day. Really? Again, you were totally blown away. Astonished and genuinely scared, thinking... back to life? How is that possible?

But as you know, sometimes you get over things, so you hopped that Jesus was going to get over it. After all, these kinds of things don’t happen—aren’t supposed to happen—ever—to the Messiah. Especially after all the miraculous things he did and the sermons he preached with authority!

But Good Friday came, He's dead. Buried! What good is a dead and buried Jesus? Can you trust in him anymore? Can you?

## **II. But now he's risen! . . . and you're so afraid.**

But of course he was a good friend, so you need to take care of his body. Well, let the ladies who took care of his physical needs during his earthly life do their thing. With spices in hand, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome head to the grave, serve him one last time, by anointing his dead body.

But things are turning out so strange now. The large stone that covers the tomb's entrance has been rolled away. The body is not there, and to add to the confusion an angel is there instead. Alarming! Shocking!

"No need to be alarmed, ladies. I know you expected to see the corpse of crucified Jesus of Nazareth. Well, he is risen! He's not here. See. Take a look. This is where they put his body. Not there anymore! But do not worry, don't be scared anymore. Instead, you go tell his disciples and especially Peter. He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see him there just as he told you."

What? Can it be? Really? Risen from the dead?

Absolutely! Just like he said! Wow! The biggest miracle of all! Straight from his mouth! He said so! Resurrection! His! On the third day!

Consequently, you and the women are visibly shaken. You never expected this to happen! Seriously, you didn't! Your hearts are pounding. The adrenaline is flowing. Your minds are racing with confusion. Your hands are trembling. So all you can do is flee from the tomb, you are afraid, you don't say anything to anyone.

## **III. So will it be payback time in Galilee?**

But, there is something else, why Galilee, why did the angel said to go there? Is it payback time? Fear comes again, confusion overtakes you again.

After all, you've all got a bad conscience. You and Peter denied and renounced Jesus. You deserted him. You wouldn't be caught dead hanging around the humiliated, arrested, and sentenced-to-death Jesus. What a difficult and dreadful falling away you committed! You wouldn't let Jesus be God for you in his shocking suffering and appalling Good Friday dying! You stayed away! You had no use for him!

This is why you're so hesitant to go meet Jesus in Galilee. You are uncertain. After all, what do you expect from Jesus—the Son of God, whom you abandoned and disowned—if he's truly risen from the dead? Payback, right? Retribution and a divine reckoning of the highest order against you for your unfaithful sins against him, right?

## **IV. No! Jesus will tell you the best news you could ever hear as a sinner:**

No. Not hardly. Not even close. Couldn't be further from the truth! He is risen! Not to give you what you expect but something else, something else you deadbeat sinner don't even imagine. It's totally amazing what he will give to you. It's going to make you tremble again, but this time of joy and hope, it's going to melt your heart!

He would meet you in Galilee to . . . are you ready for this? . . . to greet you with a friendly and courteous Easter "Good morning, friends!"

And more! So much more. He will tell you the best news you could ever hear as a sinner. It's this: "I Am God for You.

I am not your enemy. I am not against you, but I am God for you—in this way: I died for you, Peter, and the rest of you disciples. I took all your sin. I buried it in the

black hole of my tomb, and I left it there forever. It is no more. I forgive you. I don't count your sin against you at all."

#### **V. The best news is still for you today!**

Wow, things were different for the disciples back then, but with a wonderful ending, actually shall we say, with a beautiful beginning.

Yes a beginning that today resounds anew in our ears, that Jesus is risen. Brining to each of you the forgiveness of your sins, for that's what God desires. And with the forgiveness of your sins comes the new life Christ won for you. That too God desires, he desires to free us from death and the slavery it brings. And yes, today he tells to each one of us too, to not fear, or be scared but trust him.

Psychologists tell us that at the root of every fear lies our fear of death. And fear of loss and fear of failure actually flow from the fear of death. Fear your new beginnings will fail. Fear your child will die before you. Fear you will be forgotten and your life will amount to nothing. Fear you will suffer dementia like your dad or cancer like your mom. That's what death produces: fear. Wasn't that the fear of the first disciples too?

The problem for us is that death, physical death is a reality, but that reality does produce in our minds, anxiety, worry, concern and consternation, the fruits of fear of death, that enslave us. But add to that our sins, our sins of going against the first commandment. "You shall have no other Gods" yet many times we even make fear our "god" for it has enslaved us.

But worry no more, for Jesus resurrection is for you. Fear no more because your sins are forgiven through Christ. Because of him no more fear of facing God's judgment, for Jesus paid the price of our sin, and his death has become our death, equally his rising again, our rising again. Therefore, no more fear of death being the end, for Jesus rose from dead, bringing about a different ending for all who face death. For death itself, no longer speaks the final word over your life. Jesus has changed all of that. Death is now temporary, but resurrection is final. One day you, too, will receive a new glorified body just like Jesus' Easter body. No more death, no more fear, no more pain.

#### **Conclusion**

Forgiveness and life eternal! It's what his rising from the tomb is all about. His divine forgiveness is for you. And today once again, he rises in you through his body and blood, in order to act as God for you. Listen. His crucified and risen body and blood he gives you with the bread and wine with the promise that you are forgiven. "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," he declares.

And since he forgives you, you, too, will be raised on the Last Day from the grave. He will not leave you there. You are that precious to him—God for you, Jesus, that's why he tells you "You shall have no other gods."

Now, as you believe, so you have.

Blessed Easter! In the name of Jesus. Amen.