

I.N.I.

Easter Sunday
April 12, 2020
Matthew 28:1-10

In Christ Jesus, whose resurrection glory is hidden in His Word, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you think that there could be a more glorious day than Easter? Was perhaps the first day of creation more glorious, when God simply spoke and created time and space and all matter out of nothing by His almighty Word?

No! For as glorious and perfect as that first day of creation was, creation and everything in it because of sin will one day come to an end and be burned up by God and changed in a flash (**cf. 2 Peter 3:10**). But this day—the day of Christ’s resurrection—this day will shine forever in its glory and supreme importance.

Well, what about the Last Day, the day when Christ will come again in all His glory with all the saints and angels, the day on which all will rise from the dead and face the judgment seat of God? Is that day more glorious than this one? Again, no! For if this day had never happened, that day would not be glorious at all to us! Without this day, the Last Day would be filled with horror and unimaginable terror, and we would hear the voice of King Jesus say, **“DEPART FROM ME, YOU CURSED, INTO THE EVERLASTING FIRE PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS” (Matthew 25:41)**.

No, this day, the day of Christ’s resurrection, is by far the most glorious day of all time. **CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!** May you love and treasure this day as a day more glorious than your birthday, than your wedding day, than the day of the birth of your children—more than even the day of your death and of your own entrance into the glory of heaven. For this was the day heaven’s glory and everlasting life was sealed and guaranteed for **YOU!**

Today is this most glorious day of all time, but it is at first hard to see the glory of Christ. The first glorious thing we see from Matthew’s report is the angel. The angel descended from heaven, rolled away the stone to reveal an empty grave, and sat on the stone that covered its opening. The angel’s appearance was like lightning, and his face was white as snow. His appearance was so glorious, in fact, that those tough soldiers who knew how to stare death in the face were no match for the glory of the angel. Stunned and terrified, they fell to the ground and fainted like dead men. The women too, when they saw the angel, were filled with fear.

But the angel’s message is far more glorious than his appearance. **"DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I KNOW THAT YOU SEEK JESUS WHO WAS CRUCIFIED. HE IS NOT HERE; FOR HE IS RISEN, AS HE SAID. COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY. AND GO QUICKLY AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD, AND INDEED HE IS GOING BEFORE YOU INTO GALILEE; THERE YOU WILL SEE HIM. BEHOLD, I HAVE TOLD YOU."**

But what about Jesus’ glory? Don’t we want to see Jesus, the risen Lord, on this most glorious day in all the world, looking even more glorious than the angel? Don’t we want to see Him robed in splendor, with His face shining like the sun and His garments white as the light, like He appeared on the Mt. of Transfiguration? Don’t we want to see Him looking the way He will look on the Last Day? Shouldn’t our sight of Him on this most glorious day match the glory of the event?

We see His glory on that first Easter Sunday in the way He shows that glory to the women at the tomb. After they ran from the tomb at the command of the angel, Jesus appears to them. And how does He appear? With His glory hidden! Thank God for that! For if the appearance of an angel in glory caused the soldiers to fall down as dead men and filled even the hearts of the women with fear, what then, would become of us them if they would see Jesus in all His righteous, resurrection glory? Wouldn’t they freeze in terror and die of fright right on the spot? Jesus did not want to intimidate or frighten the women with His appearance that day. He had not come to terrify, but to comfort and console. So He appeared to the women as He had before He died, as the humble rabbi, in human flesh and blood. There will be a day for His appearance in majesty and glory on the Last Day, but not today. Not on Easter Sunday.

So even on Easter the Savior’s glory is hidden—where? **in Jesus’ words**. In two short

sentences, He sums up the whole glory of Lent, the whole glory of Easter, the whole glory of the Gospel. He tells the women: **"DO NOT BE AFRAID. GO AND TELL MY BRETHREN TO GO TO GALILEE, AND THERE THEY WILL SEE ME."**

"DO NOT BE AFRAID!" What a beautiful summary of our Easter joy and of the whole of the Gospel! Without Good Friday and Easter Sunday we would have nothing but fear in this life. By nature, from birth we were separated from God because of our sins. Death was our lot in this life, and hell, our future in the next. We deserved to shake and tremble in fear for time and for eternity. But Jesus died and has risen. On Friday He went into battle for us on the cross. And He won by dying. He won by being abandoned and forsaken by the Father.

Easter Sunday is the proof of it. He paid for our sin. Don't be afraid; He conquered hell. Don't be afraid; He has triumphed over the grave. **"DO NOT BE AFRAID!"**

But how can I know that He did this for me? For many times my conscience still condemns me and temptations still gnaw at me and many times I give in. Well, listen to Jesus' second sentence to the women: **"GO AND TELL MY BRETHREN!"** What an incredible thing to say! He calls the disciples His brothers! What! His brothers? All they did was fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane after Jesus had asked them to watch and pray with Him. All they did was run away, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus. All they did was behave no better than Peter, who denied he even knew the Lord with oaths and curses in the courtyard of the high priest's palace. Only one was found at the foot of the cross, John. It was mostly women who were there watching as Jesus was crucified. They certainly do not deserve to be called His brothers, do they? No!

And that's exactly the point. That's exactly the glory of Lent and of Easter. The disciples don't deserve it, and neither do we. For we are no better than they. Their sins are gone, and our sins are gone too. They are buried in Jesus' grave. And now with their sins covered and paid for in full, there is no reason why Jesus should not call the disciples His brothers. And yes, there is no reason why He should not call us His brothers and sisters also. That's just another way of Jesus saying, **"DO NOT BE AFRAID!"** We are by faith and through our baptism now precious children of a loving Heavenly Father; brothers and sister of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

That is the glory of Easter! Jesus died. Now He has risen and will never die again! We are redeemed! We are reconciled! Our sin is gone! Hell is conquered! Satan is vanquished! Death is destroyed!

So how does Jesus make His glory and the glory of Easter known to us today? Does He make it known with the glory of an angel appearing to us that would scare us to death and send us running away from him in terror? No, He still hides His glory in His Word. That's where we find it.

Did you notice how that point was emphasized in the Easter story? Jesus promised that He would rise. And He tells the women to report that to the disciples. He does not appear to the disciples right away. He wants them to depend on His Word. He emphasizes that again when He tells the women to add this detail: **He will see the disciples in Galilee.** That is what He promised them earlier before He died. He wants them to learn the lesson well, to depend on His Word, His promises in His Word! For in 40 days His visible presence will be withdrawn when He ascends into heaven. But His real and abiding presence He will not take away. He will be with them until the end of time, again just as He promised, in His Word and Sacraments.

Do you want to see and find God's glory in Easter, in our Savior's Triumph? You've come to the right place! For here where His Word is proclaimed and His Sacraments are celebrated that's where you will find His hidden glory. It is the Word that drives away our fears. For to you He says this day--just like He said to the women--*"Do not be afraid. I am not coming to you this moment to terrify you with My power and holiness.*

I am coming to you with hidden power and glory in My Word. That Word announces and declares that your sins are forgiven.

Don't be afraid. Yes, tomorrow you will still have trials and temptations, problems and pitfalls. The virus will still be around. But don't be afraid. I have died, and see, I am alive again. I will not leave you or forsake you.

Yes, death and the grave still lies ahead of you at the end of your life. But don't be afraid. I conquered it all in My death and resurrection. Because I live, you will live also. Death, the last enemy, has been defeated, and the grave is but the doorway to life eternal. And that is all found and told to you in My powerful Word, in My hidden glory."

Just as the disciples saw the resurrected Jesus in Galilee so we too see Him in His Word and some day we will see Him in full glory in heaven. Yes, and we will even share in His glory. For you and me are His brothers and His sisters. Every step of the way we need to come to His Word and return to His Word, so that through our whole journey of life we will taste and see the glory that is hidden on the cross, the glory that is hidden in His promises, the glory that is hidden in His resurrection and the glory of the assurance of our own resurrection.

“REJOICE!”

**FOR CHRIST IS RISEN!
HE IS RISEN INDEED!
THE WORD ASSURES US!
HALLELUJAH!**

Amen.