

The Old Testament is always about looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, looking forward to what he has promised, what God is going to do in the land, in the people, how he is going to come and save them. But it's looking forward. Now that he has come, now that he has died, now that he has risen from the dead, for this season of acts, we look forward. We look to what happened as a result of his death and as of his resurrection, of how the word of God was proclaimed throughout the world. And it says here, as Peter is speaking, he says, "I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Now, what a great joy and comfort that is to all of us because we are part of that every nation.

See, God did not think that it was too small of a thing just to save Israel. He didn't want to just save his people. He wanted to save the entire world. His people were supposed to be the salt and light. They were supposed to be the witnesses of a God who loves his people and the people who love their God. Well, God did the loving of his people right, but the people loving their God, they didn't quite follow through on that as well as they ought. They fell short of serving God, of loving God, of doing what is right in almost every step of the way. This morning at the earlier service, we read about their going through the Red Sea and right before they got to the Red Sea, the Pharaoh's army came and started attacking them and they cried out. "What? Have you brought us here to die?"

They saw all the miracles of God. They saw all of his working. They saw everything that God did. They saw the cloud and the fire. And yet the first thought when something difficult happens is, "We're going to die. Why is this happening to us?" And unfortunately, that is what happens to you and to me. Well, if we think about it, when something bad happens, when something evil happens, when something doesn't go the way we want it to go, our first thought is, "Well, thank God he directed me in a new direction." Well, I wish that is what we had responded. "Thank God that he is teaching me a lesson through this suffering. Thank God that I am learning to trust him in the midst of this sorrow and pain. Thank God for giving me this difficult path that I might follow him and learn his faithfulness."

That's what we ought to say. What we really say is, "Why me, God? This isn't fair." That's our first reaction. But thankfully, we have a God who loves us and knows us. He knows that that's our response. He knows that we fail to understand who he is. And so he comes to us. He appears to us and he lets us know that we are loved by him.

When the ladies go to see Jesus in the tomb, they're not expecting him to be alive. They're expecting him to be dead. They're going there to mourn. They've had Friday, Saturday, and now early Sunday morning to be in mourning for the death

of who they thought was going to be their savior. And so they're not going to the tomb for any religious epiphany. They're going to the tomb to cry because their hope had been dashed. The promise of peace had disappeared, or at least so they thought. And so they were going there. I'm not sure they really knew what they were going there to do, but they were lost. They were fearful. They were confused and they didn't know what to do.

And sometimes we in our own lives get into that situation as well. We're lost. We're confused. We don't know what to do. But Jesus comes to us and he says, "Greetings." He speaks to us. And when he speaks to us, in his word we hear the peace and the comfort of God. Because in his word we have learned that he raised from the dead. And he has set Christ above all things where Christ is seated on the right hand. When we left on Good Friday, the church looked a lot different. There was no flowers, there was no ornamentation. It was just bare wood, bare walls, and only Christ on the cross.

And we left with the slamming of the book, a recognition that he has died. And why did he die? For us. We recognize that he died because we have sinned. And so while we were, we do leave Good Friday in a somber mood. We don't leave, as Mary and Martha and all the disciples did, confused and worried and completely in shock because we know that Easter is coming. And we know that so that we have peace and comfort with God. See, the disciples and Mary and everybody else had hoped that Jesus would redeem them, but they didn't know.

We, on this side of the resurrection, we know. We realize that he has come for all people to preach good news of peace, peace with God. So today I say to you, Merry Christmas.

Merry Christmas.

Merry Christmas. Thank you. Because this is your Christmas gift. Remember, when Jesus was born, the angels appeared in the heavens and they said, "Glory to God and the highest and peace with man and God." That peace has been accomplished. We now have what was promised when he came to this earth. There was promise in all of the Old Testament. We now have it, peace with God. Not because we have earned it, not because we have lived a perfect life, but because we have been brought through the waters of our own baptism into salvation. Because Christ has died, we know that he took the sins of all of humanity and put them on the cross.

All of our sins are with Christ and he crucified them there. And the proof and the confidence that we have that that sacrifice on the cross worked is today, the Resurrection, the Christmas present that God gave to us, that Christ who became flesh, died and rose again. And because he rose, we also will be raised with Christ

ourselves. And that's what the passage right before our epistle lesson is, the baptism of ourselves. In Colossians Chapter 2, it talks about us being buried with Christ in our baptisms and raised a new life. In the Resurrection, if we've been buried with Christ in a death like his, how much more will be raised to new life in a resurrection like his?

So we are called to have a mind of the things above, not of the things of this world. What does that mean in reality for us? It means that we are to focus upon the word of God. When God came to Mary and to the Marys at the garden and he said, "Greetings," to them, they recognized and they heard his voice. And in the recognition of his voice, they believed because he is the word of God made flesh. And we have that sure and certain word written down for us in the scriptures so that we might believe and be confident.

So we are to live as if this is not our home because we've already died. Christ died and rose from the dead, so also have we died and risen from the dead. I bet you didn't remember that your death and resurrection, did you? Maybe some of you did. But you died when you were baptized. In baptism, you were drowned in the waters and your sin was washed away. And as you came out of the waters, you were redeemed and resurrected to new life. Your soul was redeemed and restored. So you have died. Every single one of us has already had a death and every single one of us has had a resurrection. And because of that, we are confident that when our last breath comes, that's not death. That's just falling asleep so that we might wake up in our new home.

We all get excited when we get to go to a new place, especially something that has just recently been built. It's got that fresh house smell and everything's new and there's all sorts of potential. But the amazing thing is the home that we are going to is beyond our imagination. Finding a new place to dwell is wonderful, but the place to dwell forever in all eternity where nothing's ever going to go wrong and things are not going to break down, including our own bodies, which we know the older we get, break down. But we are not focused upon the pains and the sorrows and the hurts and the cares and the concerns of this world. Yes, we have to live through them, but we're not consumed by them because this is a temporary dwelling place. We're just waiting, waiting for Christ to come, to bring us to dwell with him so that the life that is hidden within us will appear when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead.

Because as Peter says, he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. And I will tell you this, Christ is judging us every single day. Now, don't be afraid by that. Do not be afraid because the judgment that Christ has upon us, you are forgiven. You are free. You are my child and I love you. That is his judgment. So when it says

APRIL 5, 2026 EASTER SERMON

that he comes to judge the living and the dead, we rejoice in his judgment because his judgment is grace. His judgment is mercy. His judgment is forgiveness. And so we are called like the prophets to bear witness to that hope. See, we're not perfect, nor have we ever become perfect. And Christianity is not about us learning all the rules and getting it right because the Israelites had several thousand years to do that and they failed miserably and we do know better. Christianity is not about judging everybody else and thinking how important and better we are because we're holier than they are. It's not about that either.

What it's about is fallen imperfect people like us, poor miserable sinners, as we started out saying in our service today, who have found the hope and the promise and the peace and the forgiveness. And we want everybody else to know that. We're sinners, they're sinners. We have been forgiven by Christ. They have been forgiven by Christ. We know it, they don't. And that's what we are called to live today and all our lives, proclaiming the glories of God to a people who do not yet know him. That's why we're reading the Book of Acts during this Easter season. What is the response to the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? What is the response? We still preach Christ crucified because in his crucifixion, we were forgiven our sins, but he did not stay dead. His tomb is empty and so will ours be on the last day. Death is not to be feared. And if death is not feared, what else is there? If we do not need to be afraid of death, do we need to be afraid of anything?

As God says, don't be afraid of the one who can kill the body. Be afraid of the one who can kill body and soul. In other words, put your trust and your hope in God because he can kill you and he has killed you in your baptisms and he has made you alive in your baptism. And therefore, you do not need to be afraid. He is risen. He is risen in me. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Amen. Let us confess the faith that God-