

# "The Rising Sun Proclaims the Risen Son"

## Luke 24:1-8

April 24, 2011

Easter Sunday (Sunrise)

For some, Easter is a story – either about a bunny who delivers eggs or a Savior who has risen from the dead. For others, Easter is an event – a spring holiday, formerly for parading around in new clothes. For still others, Easter is an experience – a time of happiness and joy for various reasons. For the women in our text today, Easter was a journey.

Some see contradiction in accounts of this journey. Our Gospel reading says this took place “Early on the first day of the week, *while it was still dark.*” St. Matthew says it happened, “After the Sabbath, *at dawn* on the first day of the week.” Our text for today says, “On the first day of the week, *very early in the morning.*” St. Mark says, “Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise.” Rather than show contradictions, these accounts show that Easter was a journey and not an event for these women.

The women rose on that first day of the week – Sunday – while it was still dark. The darkness of the day probably reflected their mood. They were filled with sadness and grief because of the death of their Lord and their need to finish His burial which had been hastily begun on Friday afternoon.

The women began their journey at dawn – the time that is not quite dark and not quite light. Their feelings were probably the same – not quite grief and not quite happiness. Their mind was focused on the job at hand. Perhaps the light of dawn was a bit comforting.

The women approached the tomb very early in the morning. The sun was coming up. They are concerned about who will move the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. But, when they arrive at the tomb, the stone has already been moved. When they go in, the light of the rising sun is overcome by a greater light from the tomb. The body of the Lord Jesus is not there, but two angels in dazzling apparel are there. They say to the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” There is hope, but there is still confusion.

They come out of the tomb. Now it is after sunrise. The sun is brightly shining in the sky. It is a beautiful new day. But this is not the only sun to rise this day. A far greater son – the Son of God – has risen, not from the darkness of night, but from the darkness of death. He appears to Mary as our Gospel reading for this morning says. Matthew reports that, while the rest of the women were on their way back to Jerusalem, Jesus appears to them and tells them, “Do not be afraid!” Their day began in darkness and grief over their Lord’s death. It continued through the uncertainty of dawn and early morning. Now, the day was fully here. There was complete light and complete joy over the resurrected Lord. There was nothing to fear and nothing to grieve.

This Easter journey is a metaphor for our lives. Salvation is a journey as well. We begin in darkness – literal darkness. In the beginning, the Scripture says, “the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep.” Although God said, “Let there be light” and there was light, the world was plunged into spiritual darkness when Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s will at the leading of the Prince of Darkness – Satan.

As a result, we begin our lives in darkness. It is the darkness of evil, sin, and unbelief. We are born in sin and in sin did our mothers conceive us as the Psalmist says. We are spiritually blind and unable to come out of the darkness. On our own we are doomed to the blackest darkness reserved for Satan and his evil angels.

This is the darkness into which Jesus was sent. He came to bear your sin, my sin, the sin of the entire world and to endure the wrath of a holy and righteous God against it. This judgment was played out in total darkness. The Scripture says that, when Jesus was crucified, “it was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining.” (Luke 23:44) This seemed simply horrible, but dawn was about to break.

As He hangs dying on the cross, Jesus speaks, "It is finished!" But it is not finished in the way we might take it. This is not the sunset of Jesus' life. It is the early dawn of our lives. It is completed! God's judgment of sin is completed against Jesus instead of us. The payment for sin is completed in the shed blood of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself. The defeat of death is completed by the death of the Son of God in the flesh.

The journey moves into the early morning. The light which has been there for all becomes yours individually. In Baptism, God calls you out of darkness into His wonderful light through the washing away of your sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Like the women who went to the tomb, you hear the Word of God preached to you, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." You receive forgiveness for your sin in Divine Service through confession and absolution. Your faith is strengthened by His Word, read and preached. Your faith is fed in His Holy Supper.

As with the women, although the sun is beginning to shine, darkness has not been fully chased away. You have hope and confidence, yet you experience confusion and doubt. You see the light of God's love, but still fall into the darkness of Satan's temptation and sin. You are fully justified and declared holy by God, yet, at the same, time a guilty sinner.

As the women came out of the tomb, the full brightness of the sin hit them as they encountered the risen and living Jesus directly. Because Jesus rose from the dead on this morning many years ago, God promises that same experience to each us of here. We can look forward to the day, either at our death or when Jesus returns, when we encounter the risen Jesus directly and dwell in perfect and complete life in Jesus' presence forever. As the last book of the Bible, Revelation, says of that life

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.... No longer will there be any curse. The throne

of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 21:22-23; Rev. 22:3-5)

So much of our piety as Christians has to do with words in which we engage only our minds. For that reason, we also try to employ audio and visual elements to our piety – songs and hymns, stained glass windows, processional crosses, paraments, and robes. Words, audio elements, visual elements are all designed to share with you the Gospel message of the forgiveness of sin through the death of Jesus on the cross and everlasting life through Jesus resurrection from the dead.

Today, I would like the entire experience of a Sunrise Service preach to you the importance of this day. You rose this morning in darkness. That reminds you of your sin. You came to church at dawn. You sought a remedy for sin. While in church, the early morning came. This reminds you that, while you were in here, you heard the Word of God which condemned your sin and then forgave it. If you stay for the late service, you will feast on the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion to strengthen your faith. And then you'll step out of the muted light of this church building into (hopefully) the bright sunlight of a beautiful spring day. This reminds you of when you will step out of the muted light of the church militant into the bright and unending light of the church triumphant in heaven.

Easter is a journey from dark to light, sin to righteousness, death to life. We can remember that every time we come to Divine Service on every SUNDAY. For the rising of the sun proclaims the risen Son. Amen.