

Text: John 20:1-18

Theme: A Joyous Race

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel lesson according to St. John, the twentieth chapter, verses one through eighteen.

Jesus has indeed risen from the dead! The gravestone has been rolled away. He is no longer in the tomb. He is no longer dead but alive again! So where is Jesus? What are we to make of the fact that His body is no longer in the tomb? This is the question that Mary, John, and Peter have today. Mary has gone early in the morning to finish anointing Jesus' body in death. She sees that the grave is opened and runs to John and Peter, proclaiming that someone has taken Jesus' body and they do not know where He is. The women think that grave robbers have taken Jesus' body somewhere but they do not know where.

John and Peter rush to the tomb. This is worrisome, anxious, and fear filled race that leads to a bewildering and joyous end. John arrives first but stands there pondering what all of this means. Peter does not stop but rushes into the tomb. He stares intently at the grave clothes lying there. They are not in disarray but placed nice and neat in their proper places, the cloth that was covering Jesus' face lying folded up. The same as we would if we were done with eating a meal. This signifies that Jesus' work on the cross is completed fully. Our Salvation has been won for us. Jesus is no longer dead but alive forever! A poem by R. S. Thomas encapsulates this feeling of our text this morning. He was an Anglican priest whose poems are often as bleak as the Welsh

landscape where he ministered. In this excerpt from his poem “The Answer” he writes thus:

... There have been times  
when, after long on my knees  
in a cold chancel, a stone has rolled  
from my mind, and I have looked  
in and seen the old questions lie  
folded and in a place  
by themselves, like the piled  
graveclothes of love’s risen body.

This detail about the grave clothes proves that while Jesus’ body is no longer in the tomb, it was not the work of grave robbers. No grave robber in their right mind would leave expensive spices and linens just lying there. They would have taken them with them and sold them for a profit. Peter leaves in wonder and amazement at what this could mean. John leaves believing that Jesus must be alive, even though both have yet to fully understand the Scriptures.

How many times do we have similar questions and wonderings? We wonder, what does all of this mean? Did Jesus really die and rise from the dead? How do we know that all of Holy Scripture is true?

These questions are answered as we turn and join with Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles as we analyze and look at Scripture. These Scriptures we have with us still today. The Old Testament and New Testament, the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. All of them foretell of Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead for us. We hear the announcement from Mary, we join with Peter and John in this joyous race, knowing how it all ends. Knowing that Jesus is not dead, but alive forever. We rejoice that what Jesus did, He did for you. That because of Jesus, we are no longer dead in our trespasses and sins. We have been crucified and buried with Christ on the Cross and in the tomb. Full atonement has been made for us. Jesus has carried all of our sins and the punishment for them once and for all. We are forgiven. We are no longer cut off and

alienated from God. In Christ, God deigns to call us by name, just as He did with Mary. He calls sinners “His brothers.” Peter who denied our Lord, the other disciples who abandoned Jesus and ran and fled in fear, Jesus now calls, not friends, but brothers, members of God’s family. The same is true of us. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, we who were called sinners, now are cleansed, and reconciled back to God. Jesus calls us His beloved brothers and sisters, now and forever.

We run this race with joy and rejoicing over the fact that Jesus is not dead but alive. Rejoicing that He is with us in His Word and Sacraments, creating and sustaining faith in us. Rejoicing until that glorious day when Jesus comes again and we will be with Him forever and ever because...

Alleluia! Christ has risen!

He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!