

## From the Pastor's Desk

*But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. – Luke 24:12*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Having said that, for various reasons it did not entirely feel like Easter this year to me. Perhaps you felt the same way. Maybe it was the snow storm on Maundy Thursday. I don't believe I've ever had to spend parts of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday shoveling. Maybe it was having to cancel our Maundy Thursday service. That was a first for me, as well. Maybe it was our Easter morning attendance being a bit down this year. Maybe it was having additional pastoral obligations the rest of the day on Easter Sunday and in the days immediately following.

Whatever it was exactly, it didn't really ever get to sink in this year that it was Easter until Easter Sunday had already come and gone. Talking with a handful of members this week who couldn't be in church on Easter Sunday at all, and for whom it also didn't feel like Easter as a result, caused me to realize that I was not alone.

The final verse in the Holy Gospel for the 9:30 service on Sunday, printed above, caught my eye as it was being read during the service. And I was drawn back to it again this week. It is a verse which captures the essence of Easter morning in a number of its details.

First, I like to be reminded that Peter ran to the tomb after hearing the report of the women who had already been there. He was not content simply to walk and to take his time. John 20:3-4 records that both Peter and John ran to the tomb that morning, together. In fact, John 20:4 notes that John outran Peter and got there first. I have always loved that image.

Second, I like to be reminded that Peter, when he arrived at the tomb, stooped and looked inside. I like to imagine what that must have been like. John 20:5-9 says that Peter went so far as to enter the tomb. John eventually joined him. There they both observed the evidence that Jesus' body had been there but was there no longer. One of my favorite Easter details is recorded in John 20:7, which says that at that time Peter saw that Jesus' face cloth was *folded up in a place by itself*. I like to picture Jesus intentionally folding that cloth before He left the tomb.

Third, and this is the detail that particularly caught my eye this year, after he had run to the tomb and looked inside, Peter went home *marveling* at what had happened. What about us?

The truth is that we are not always going to be able to walk into a church packed full of people on Easter Sunday. We are not always going to be able to walk out of church on Easter Sunday and into a beautiful, sunshine-filled, Spring day, to the sights of green grass and flowers blooming. In fact, we may not always be able to be in church at all. Sometimes it is more important to be at the bedside of a loved one or to be at home recuperating from illness. We are not always going to be able to bask in the joy of Easter Sunday for

days on end before returning to our daily obligations and responsibilities. In short, it isn't always going to feel like Easter.

Thanks and praise be to God, however, regardless of how we may feel, that the news of Easter always remains the same. And the double good news is that we don't even have to reserve our celebration of the Good News of Easter for Easter Sunday itself! Jesus' tomb was empty on that first Easter morning. That means that He was and is risen from the dead and alive. It means that He was and is completely victorious over sin and death and Satan. It means that we who believe in Him as Savior have inherited, by the super-abundant grace and mercy of God, the promise of the bodily resurrection to life everlasting as our own. As St. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57:

*Then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Peter went home *marveling* at what had happened on that first Easter morning. As the details were gradually filled in and the whole picture became clearer to him and the rest of the disciples, I don't imagine that he ceased to marvel in the days and weeks following. May God grant, regardless of what Easter may have felt like this year, and regardless of how you have been feeling in the days since, that we enter the month of April and the rest of the Easter season *marveling* at what happened on that first Easter Sunday, as well. And may God grant that we may never *cease to marvel* at the unchanging, life-changing Easter news that Jesus is risen and alive and eternally victorious!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In His Service,

Pastor Derek Riddle

## Love Illusions

In the December newsletter, I promised to return in future columns to some of the information Dr. Bryan Salminen shared during the October "Keeping Love Alive" Marriage Workshop. In the second half of the workshop, Dr. Salminen addressed five "Love Illusions." In February, I shared the first illusion: "Love is a feeling." Last month I shared the second illusion: "Relationships should be free of conflict." This month I would like to continue by sharing the third illusion: "Our relationship can never change because of my partner's personality."

We often see other people through a certain "lens" or as fitting a particular psychological "label." This is often true of our spouses, as well. What we may not realize is that the people around us often live up to the labels we assign to them. Our labels also tend to minimize their humanity and uniqueness.

When we attribute a particular problem to a personality, we wind up feeling helpless to change the situation. However,

contrary to popular belief, bad habits can be changed. The assumption is often made that history is a predictor of the future. On the contrary, people can change. One way to initiate a desired change is to resolve first to change yourself, perhaps by changing how you react to a particular personality trait or habit.

In marriage we often focus on our partner's negative personality traits, as if they only display those traits in all circumstances. When we do so, we tend to forget that there are lots of times when they don't display those negative traits. If we focus our attention on their positive traits, perhaps we will succeed in recognizing that our differences are just that. They are not necessarily faults.

In coming months I will share two additional "love illusions" Dr. Salminen shared with us: (4) My husband can't communicate. And (5) My wife is always nagging me.

## BOARD OF ELDERS

Here we are coming off a 'big high' with the Easter celebration of Holy Week and Easter Sunday, praising God for sending His Son to be the atonement for our sins. Along with the excitement of being with family and friends, preparing the meals, cleaning the house, or traveling to be with our family and friends just seems to take all our energy out of us. We just need to lay back and take a rest, thinking of ourselves and what we want or think we deserve. God has called us through our baptism to be His own and live under Him in His kingdom. Everything we have, we have received from God. Our greatest gift is Jesus, who suffered, died and rose again for our sins, who came to serve and not to be served. Jesus tells His disciples to go out and spread the Gospel to all nations. Jesus also calls us to serve Him with the gifts and blessings that He has given us. We may help the needy, listen to someone who is hurting or who just needs someone to talk to. We put our trust in Jesus and go where He sends us, spreading the Gospel to further His kingdom. We do not need to know the Bible inside and out to share the good news of Jesus. We can share what we have learned in Sunday School, Bible Class and church to spread the Gospel of our Lord to others. May God bless us all as a caring family, as we reach out to others and share Christ's love, teaching God's Word, so that all may be saved and live under Him in His kingdom. Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

## The Lutheran Hour

The Lutheran Hour can be heard locally on Sunday mornings at 7:00 a.m. on 92.5 FM and at 11:00 a.m. on 1450 AM. You can also listen on-line or via podcast at [www.lutheranhour.org](http://www.lutheranhour.org). Now you can also download the new Lutheran Hour Mobile App to your mobile device. Instructions for doing so can be found at [www.lhm.org/apps/](http://www.lhm.org/apps/).

### April 3

"Blessed Are Believers"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
By faith in Jesus, you are blessed—even as your struggles continue.  
(John 20:19-31)

### April 10

"Breakfast with Jesus"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
Jesus shows up and shows us that God is close and God cares.  
(John 21:1-14)

### April 17

"Confidence for Life"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz

Jesus' miracles were signs of God breaking into a sinful world, but the religious leaders saw it as a threat to their kingdoms. (John 10:22-30)

### April 24

"One-upmanship"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
Heaven will be more beautiful than we can imagine; it will rectify our problems and satisfy our most profound longings. (Revelation 21:1-7)

## Stewardship Corner

The greatest surprise about Easter is not that Jesus is alive, risen from the dead, out of the grave, that He conquered death and hell, and comes to meet you as He promised. The greatest surprise is that He did all that and is not angry. There is no fear for us in His return because He is not angry. He bears no grudge. He seeks no vengeance. He comes to give peace, with mercy and forgiveness and salvation.

Jesus lives and is not angry. Imagine that. He is not angry. He doesn't blame those who killed Him. He doesn't blame you. For no one takes His life from Him. He lays it down of His own accord. He gives Himself into death to win us back from sin, death, and hell. He does it willingly without coercion. He does it sacrificially, Him for us. He gave what was His to give. Thus His petition to the Father from the cross, "Forgive them" is granted to you in His resurrection. He comes alive out of death to forgive and to give His life to you.

There is nothing to be afraid of because Jesus is raised from the dead and is not angry. Thus we are free—free from worrying about how to make it up to Him, and free to give as He has given to us. He gave Himself as a gift, His life in exchange for our death, willingly and sacrificially. And so it is that we are now free to give in like manner: willingly, sacrificially, with what we have been given.

We give to the church because it is in the church where our eyes have seen and our ears have heard that Jesus lives and is not angry. It is here where we learn of God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ. It is here where we continually receive that message of life, where He visits us to give peace, with mercy and forgiveness and salvation.

So do not be afraid. Jesus lives, and He is not angry. The sacrifice has been made. The debt is canceled and forgotten. Righteousness is declared. Jesus lives. He lives, and He is not angry. You are restored. You are reconciled to the Father in the Son. Your future is assured: Jesus lives. It is not just death and Hell, the devil and his demons, that are undone. Your sins, your fear are undone. They are gone, forgotten, destroyed. Jesus lives. Hallelujah! Jesus lives. And because He lives, you are just. You are right with God, pleasing and delightful to Him. You are forgiven, clean, pure, holy, and filled with His good works and with His Name. He is not angry. He is glad to have you. He wants you. He loves you. He gave everything that is His to and for you, willingly and sacrificially. In faith and trust in Him, let us do likewise.

Taken from [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)

## Keep Our Ministry Growing

Please remember that the purpose of paying off our church mortgage is to free up finances so that our congregation can explore new ministry programs. It is exciting to see our balance going down. The balance as of March 12 is now \$11,034.78. God works in wonderful ways. In your mailbox there is a special envelope to make it easy for you to participate in this project if you are able. Maybe you would like to donate an amount in honor or memory of a loved one. Please keep the Planning Team and this project in your prayers.