

“Facing Forward”  
Easter

April 16, 2017  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

**[*The Women*]**

When the Sabbath was over,  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were looking ahead.

After the close of the Sabbath at dusk on Saturday,  
the two Marys went to the marketplace and bought spices and oils.

They knew what they had to do. And they got all the supplies they needed.  
They had to do this one last act of honor and kindness for their late Lord.  
Ready, they went to sleep.

At the crack of dawn they were up – more than that, they were on the move!  
They were determined to anoint his body  
– for there had not been time on Friday afternoon.  
They were moving forward, moving on.

So very early on Sunday morning, as the sun rose, they went to the tomb.

**[*Moving Forward*]**

When you take a good look at the Gospel reading for this Easter Sunday,  
everything about it is forward-looking and future focused.

Matthew indicates that the women approached the tomb  
TOWARD the dawn of the first day of the week.

They were moving forward. There was forward momentum.

And think about the angel’s words to the women, “He is not here.”  
Those words, “He is not here,”  
hints towards the fact that the women shouldn’t be dealing in the present.  
They need to think beyond this place.

And again, the angel’s words “See the place where he had been laid.”  
Those words seem to be another way of saying,

“Christ’s death is in the past.

He did not stay there. He doesn’t lay there

He did once, but now he doesn’t.

So don’t dwell on that.”

Then the next words from the angel are ... “Go quickly and tell his disciples.”

Do you hear the urgency?

Do you hear the urgency to let the future begin right now?

“Let’s get things moving,” the angel is imploring the women.

“Let’s let the future start as soon as possible.”

And the women oblige.

They depart quickly from the tomb,

and they run to tell the disciples the good news,

but before they reach the disciples,

the risen Lord Jesus meets them,

and after the women worship him,

Jesus keeps the forward motion.

He keeps the forward motion toward the future going.

Jesus echoes the words of the angel,

“Go and tell my brothers...”

“Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me.”

It is like a chain reaction. The dominos fall! And they all fall forward!

You see...

The disciples must go forth as well

and keep moving forward to see Jesus

and to continue the work he has planned for them to do.

*[Our Lives]*

What we see happening on this first Easter

is what our lives as Easter people should be.

As followers of Christ, we are Easter people.

And as Easter people we move swiftly toward the future glory –

the future glory of life eternal with our Lord.

Our lives ... they are not to be stuck in the past.  
Our lives are not to be stuck in the past as we ruminate over sins...  
    sins of days gone by  
    or feel guilty about what we have or what we haven't done.

All that is behind us now. *Christ has risen. He has risen, indeed. Alleluia.*

[*Goal*]

There is no looking back in the life of Easter people.  
    All of life is about reaching the goal that Christ has set before us.

Hebrews 12:1-2 talks about this: *“Let us also lay aside every weight,  
and sin which clings so closely,  
    and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,  
    looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,  
    who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,  
    despising the shame,  
    and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Our future glory with Christ should be our goal,  
    not rehashing the things of the past  
    or letting our present situation stop us in our tracks.

The resurrection of Christ should always be  
    the catalyst for everything we say and do in our future.

We often talk  
    in this world  
    about what might be or what could be.

And while the specifics along the way might not be fully know.  
    St. Paul tells us, “It’s like looking through a glass dimly”

We do know – in the end – what WILL BE.

We WILL BE live eternally with our Savior.  
We WILL BE fully forgiven of our sins.  
We WILL BE free from death.  
We WILL BE released from pain and sorrow and sickness. It will be no more!

No events in future days on this earth  
can ever change the facts of what WILL BE  
because of the resurrection of Christ Jesus.  
*Christ has risen. He has risen, indeed. Alleluia.*

And you know what?  
That makes a difference in how we live from day to day.  
The resurrection of Jesus makes a difference.  
Oh! How it makes a difference!

**[Conclusion]**

Therefore,  
every situation,  
every circumstance ... we may face in the future  
becomes for us as Easter people  
a time to shine.

It becomes a time for us to say, "I am loved by God and so are you."  
It is a time for us to say, "Christ is alive in me and in each and every one of us."  
It is a time to say, "Rise up and live your life for him."

When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,  
the author and perfecter of our faith,  
nothing in the world can ever get in our way.

Let the vision of our future glory with our risen Christ  
guide you every day of the future.

Let your life be an "Alleluia!" to Christ. Amen.

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,  
for ever and ever! AMEN!

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