"The King is Dead! Long Live the King!"
Matthew 28:1-6

4 April Anno Domini 1999
The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

The Old Testament is the prophetic trumpet which declares that the King of kings is coming into the world. The psalmist announces the King of glory. Indeed, David wrote what we sing as confession of the faith during the season of the church year known as Advent ...

> *Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!*
> *that the King of glory may come in.*
> *Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty,*
> *the Lord, mighty in battle!*
> *Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!*
> *that the King of glory may come in.*
> *Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts,*
> *He is the King of glory! (Psalm 24:7-10)*

Thus the children of God waited for the King of creation to enter into history as promised; for the Lord, Who is mighty in battle, to save His people. Please listen to the sermon text for this Easter Sunday, Matthew 28:1-6, under the theme of ...

... The King is Dead! Long Live the King!

Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Fear not; for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay."

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

The ancient doors opened and the King of glory was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin. After the Infant King was manifested to the world in the little town of Bethlehem, *behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His Star in the East, and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1-2).*

Thirty some years later a great crowd of people *heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (John 12:12).*

A few days later, Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate who asked Him, *"Are you the King of the Jews? (Matthew 27:11).* Jesus answered, *"You have said so" (Luke 23:3).* Later Jesus replied once again to a question from the Roman governor, *"You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37).* Sinful man mocked Him by placing a purple robe on Him and crowning Him with a crown of thorns.

A few hours later, Jesus not only bore witness to the truth, but bore the burden of the world's sins when He was crucified in our place. Behold, here the Creator King is suffering to redeem His creation from eternal destruction and death. Above His thorn-pierced head is a sign declaring the reason He was crucified. *In Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek (John 19:20)*, the sign read, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews (John 19:19).* At three o'clock that afternoon the King, after having paid the price for every single one of your sins of thought, word and deed, breathed His last.

The King is Dead! Mary His mother, John the disciple, and the faithful women at the foot of the cross knew the truth. The King is Dead! Jesus, the Son of God has died. The centurion who was in charge of the crucifixion and the soldier who pierced Jesus' side with a spear could testify to the truth. The King is Dead! Jesus, the Son of Man has died. Joseph of Arimathea and Nickodemus, who took the Body down from the cross, could have told you the truth. The King is Dead! The Lord of hosts died. If newly hewn tombs could talk, then the one with the stone door, the governor's seal, and the posted guard, the one containing the Body of Jesus, would say, "The King of Glory has died. Oh, yes, the King is dead."

Thus the church confesses her belief that Jesus was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. This is most certainly true.

About thirty-six hours later, the day after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, while it was still dark several women gather the supplies needed for the work ahead of them. Why are they doing this? They knew the truth and had you been out early that first Easter morning as they passed by on their way to the tomb, and had you asked them, "Where is the King?" they would have told you, "The King is Dead."

Thus Mary Magdalene and the other Mary continue on their way to the garden and the grave to prepare Jesus' Body properly -- to give Him a decent burial. *And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Fear not; for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay."*

The message of the Easter angel is that Jesus Who was crucified, is no longer in the tomb. Years later, the Apostle Peter would write of this blessed truth. Jesus descended into hell, not in defeat and humiliation, but in victory announced that neither death nor Hades has conquered Him. In other words, He has *proclaimed to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19)* that He is alive. The King lives!

The message of the Easter angel is that Jesus Who died on Good Friday is risen just as He said He would on third day. If the message on Holy Saturday is, "The King is Dead!", then the proclamation on Easter Sunday is, "The King is Risen!" and the Church's response is: "Long Live the King!"

That Good News is what we confess as we sing,

> "I know that my Redeemer lives;
> What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
> He lives, He lives, Who once was dead;
> He lives, my ever-living Head."

All the other monarchs who have ever occupied a throne in this world have died or will die. For each one of them, the announcement "The king is dead" means that someone else will succeed them. When the new king, the next in line, is crowned, the people shout "Long live the king" with the hope that the new king's reign would last quite a few years. Kings come and kings go. Likewise, kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. Never, in the history of the world have these two statements been applied to the same person. That is, not until Easter morning when the announcement of the angel changed the proclamation of "The King is Dead!" to "Long Live the King!" That refers to the same person ... Jesus the Christ, and dear friend, this King Lives Forever! Because He has conquered sin, death and the devil when He died on the cross and rose again from the dead, He lives, rules, and reigns throughout all eternity.

Forty days from today, the Church celebrates the Ascension of Jesus -- the King Who, while at the same time remaining with His people always to the end of the age, is enthroned in heaven once again. From there, at the end of history, He will assemble all people before His judgment seat. *On His robe and on His thigh He has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16).*

Those who are His people; who believe and trust in Him as their Savior, Lord and King will be at His right hand. Those who do not will be forced to be at His other hand. *Then the King will say to those at His right hand, "Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Then He will say to those at His left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).*

Thus the church confesses her belief that Jesus descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead -- the living and the dead. This is most certainly true.

On this Easter Sunday, whether you are visitor or member, no matter how grievously you may have sinned and offended God, no matter how long you may have avoided the Lord and His Church, please hear the Word of God announced to you by an Easter messenger: *"Fear not; for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay."* Amen.