"Ye Sons and Daughters of the King!"
John 20:19-31

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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Dear sons of Adam and daughters of Eve who, by virtue of Baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus, are also son and daughters of the King,

Christ is risen! Hallelujah! As Christians we are still celebrating the amazing events which are the reason why we gather to worship on the first day of the week -- the Resurrection of Jesus -- the Son of God and the Son of Man. Think about the varieties of culture, nationalities, personalities, interests, economic status, and languages of the people who assemble to worship the Triune God. Yet, they are the children of God -- not based upon anything other than the solidarity of the great confession -- Christ is Risen!

What a diversity of peoples! On any Sunday there are people congregating here from homes which are as close as 40 feet from where I am standing, and as far as Bangkok, Thailand (halfway around the world) -- nationalities represented in this congregation include German, Norwegian, English, Thai, Greek, Philipino, Italian, Irish, Papuan, Mexican, Polish, Scotch, French, and others -- there are wide ranges in the educational levels and economic positions. Management and labor are represented here. What a diversity! Yet, we are the children of God based upon a common confession of the faith.

We do not, however, gather here for any old reason, or for the purpose simply of gathering. The sons and daughters of the King, you, have come to hear of the Good News of God in Christ -- the Gospel which transcends culture, economic status, geographic boundaries, personality, and educational level. You have come to hear that Christ is risen and to sing praises to God that the grave has lost its sting. Therefore, listen to the Gospel reading once more and rejoice, ...

.... Ye Sons and Daughters of the King!

John 20 -- 19On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." 22And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." 26Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and

Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." 27Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." 28Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." 30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.

This is the Word of the LORD our God.

Please take a hymnal and open it up to hymn #208. This hymn will serve as the outline for the sermon and we will be singing stanzas of it throughout the sermon. A short look at this page in your hymnal reinforces what has been said about the Gospel spanning not only culture and nation, but also time. Look at the upper left corner, under the hymn number #208. The hymn is based upon the chapter from which our Gospel reading comes. The hymn was originally written in Latin with the beginning stanza being, *O filii et filiae* -- "O sons and daughters." The author of this medieval hymn, "Ye Sons and Daughters of the King," is unknown. Some of the stanzas have been attributed to a Franciscan friar named Jean Tisserand who died in Paris in 1494. It was translated by an Englishman named John Neale. The tune, *Gelobt sei Gott*, is written by a German, Melchior Vulpius in 1609.

The first stanza of the hymn is in the form of an announcement made to the One, Holy, Christian, Apostolic Church -- to you, sons and daughters of the King. The content of this pronouncement is that "Christ is Risen." The LORD Jesus, Who was dead, is alive. Death has been defeated by Him and because He lives you sons and daughters of the King will live also. The grave could not hold Him and it will not hold those who are His. Let's sing that first stanza:

1 Ye Sons and daughters of the King, Whom heav'nly hosts in glory sing
Today the grave hath lost its sting: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

One of the first things we notice about this hymn is that it is filled with Alleluias! Alleluia means "praise to the LORD" -- a shout or song of praise to the LORD Who reigns above heaven and earth. It is the tradition of this congregation, during the Lenten season, to omit the singing of the alleluias as we focus on the suffering and the death of Jesus. Easter morning breaks in on us with the pronouncement of "Christ is Risen." The Church responds with shouts of "alleluias" to our King.

The second and the third stanzas give us the context for our sermon text. Very early, while it was yet dark, several women had gone to the tomb. They were on the sad mission of finishing those things necessary for a proper burial of the body of Jesus. Their hearts were filled with sorrow. In the short time span of that walk from where they spent the night to the garden where the tomb was located, they survived an earthquake, were devastated at the thought that someone had stolen the body of Jesus, were visited by an angel with the best news that they could hear, Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here; see the place where they laid Him. Stanzas 2 & 3:

2 On that first morning of the week, Before the day began to break,
The Marys went their LORD to seek: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

3 An angel bade their sorrow flee, For thus He spake unto the three:
"Your LORD is gone to Galilee:" Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

We now pick up with the our text. It is the evening of that first Easter. Ten of the remaining eleven disciples were together with some other disciples. Thomas is not with them and we know not where he was. The women who had met the angels and then had seen and heard Jesus early in the morning had brought this news. Peter and John had seen the tomb -- empty save the burial cloths. Mary Magdalene had seen the risen LORD and had brought the message from Him. While this occurred in the morning of this wonderful day did not produce faith among the disciples. Earlier, at a time and a place not recorded in the Bible, Jesus appeared to Peter. Two followers of Christ, who had gone to Emmaus, had returned to be with the disciples. The doors are locked and the disciples are afraid to venture forth because of their fellow countrymen who were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Suddenly, in another miracle of His Resurrection, Jesus appears. Just as the tomb could not hold Him, neither are locked doors able to keep Him out. What does He say to those who had abandoned Him as He went to the cross and as He died the most horrible death ever died? What does He say to these fearful, weak, hiding ones who doubted the Word of Jesus given to them through the women? What would He say? Let's sing the next stanza and find out -- stanza #4 ....

4 That night the Apostles met in fear,
Amidst them came their LORD most dear
And said: "Peace be unto you here": Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

No wonder you Christians sing "Alleluia" -- when the LORD Who was abandoned (except by a handful of people) on Good Friday and when those who were supposedly His followers could not be with Him for one hour and Who had every right to demand a pound of flesh and to scourge the backs of those who did not believe His promise to rise again -- I mean how many times has He forgiven them and still they messed up their lives and gone their separate ways -- they treated Him and His Word as if they were nothing. Jesus said to them, "Peace be unto you!" Then He showed them His hands and His side -- He showed them the marks of His crucifixion.

That, dear people, is the purest Gospel -- the sweetest Good News. Peace be unto you -- look at these nail prints in My hands and feet -- look at My side where the spear pierced Me. The wounds of Christ shout out the Good News: "I Am Jesus and I Am Risen -- death has been defeated, your salvation is completed, forgiveness comes undepleted." Is it any wonder that the Apostle John writes, Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." We sing stanza #5 ....

5 When Thomas afterwards had heard, That Jesus had fulfilled His Word,
He doubted if it were the LORD: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thomas had not been there when Jesus appeared to the disciples. He had doubted and said that Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe. It is now a week later. The disciples, Thomas included, were in the house and the doors were locked. Jesus appears to them once more and says to Thomas: Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing. Or, in the words of the 6th stanza of the hymn .....

6 "Thomas, behold My side," saith He, "My hands, My feet, My body, see;
And doubt not, but believe in Me": Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Again, pure Gospel. Thomas, these wounds were inflicted for you. Do you see these marks of the nails? You are not excluded because of them -- in fact, you are included because of them. Do you believe My Word of Promise? Do you believe Me? Stanza # 7 ....

7 No longer Thomas then denied; He saw the feet, the hands, the side:
"Thou art my LORD and God," he cried: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

One of the Spirit-wrought actions of the Christian who has been restored or reassured of God's forgiveness and acceptance is that of confession. This I believe. Peter confessed, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The wise woman at the Samarian well made her confession by asking, not a question of doubt but one of witnessing belief, Can this be the Christ? The centurion who crucified Jesus confessed, Truly this Man was the Son of God. Thomas' confession? My LORD and my God! There are many ways in which to make a confession of the faith. This morning, we made ours in the words of the Nicene Creed. Not only is Jesus Thomas' LORD and God, He is mine.

When all the "my LORD and my Gods" gather we celebrate the confession of OUR LORD -- of Who He is, of what He has done, and of what He will do. What a wonderful, beautiful plural possessive pronoun is contained in the name of this congregation. The LORD is not merely THE Redeemer, not only my Redeemer, not only your Redeemer -- He is OUR Redeemer! For the Word of hope and promise is not restricted to those who saw Jesus with their own eyes, but also for those, like you and me, who have not yet seen Him. Let us sing of that truth in the 8th stanza:

8 Blessed are they that have not seen,
And yet whose faith hath constant been,
In life eternal they shall reign: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Whether your journey to this place today has been one of less than a block; or, flying half way around the world; -- whether your journey has been one which has been marked by a God-pleasing life within His Church; or, been marked by God-disappointing steps which have caused you to stray far from the fold -- Jesus not only lived that you may have eternal life -- He not only took your sins upon Himself as He died in your place; but He also rose on that most holy day of all days -- the day of His Resurrection. Through His Word you have been shown the Holy wounds of Christ. Stanza #9 ....

9 On this most holy day of days, To God your hearts and voices raise;
In laud and jubilee and praise: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name. For stanza #10 we will stand and sing as a united offertory.

10 And we with holy Church unite, As evermore is just and right,
In glory to the King of light: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.