"And on the Eighth Day, ..."
John 20:26-28

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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Fear not; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the eighth day since Easter. The eighth day is the last counting day and there are no other counting days that follow. Now this may seem a bit strange to you, for most people, even those who are not Lutherans know that yesterday was the seventh day of last week and today is the first day of a new week. I mean, it doesn't take a rocket theologian to know that a week is made up of Sunday through Saturday and there are only seven days in that time period we call a week. We count the days of the week up to seven and then begin over again. Both those within the Church and those without the Church are able to recall that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. So what is this eighth day business?

Actually, God, in His grace and mercy, added the eighth day. In a perfect world only seven days were necessary and indeed, the Lord created the perfect place in six days and ceased from His creative work on the seventh day. No more days were required in that good place where Creator and His creation were in perfect fellowship, communion and harmony. Seven was the number of completeness and not a single day more was necessary.

As you are well aware, from both your life and from the Holy Scriptures, we don't live in a perfect world. The good place has been corrupted by sin which brought death with it. The seven days of the week - Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday - are the days in which we are created, born, live and die. You and I needed another day added - an eighth day, a day in which we may be re-created, born again, born from above and live eternally. So God, in His mercy, grace, kindness and love, has given us exactly what we had to have ... an eighth day. Our sermon text is John 20:26-28. Please listen to that portion of the Holy Writ under the theme of ...

"And on the Eighth Day, ..."

Eight 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." Then 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." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Let's begin by saying that Thomas gets singled out and kind of picked on. History calls him, Doubting Thomas. Actually, he was, at the time, Unbelieving Thomas, but he was really no different from any other human being. On Easter morning Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to the women, *and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them (Luke 24:9-11).* Not one of the men, Thomas included, not one of the Doubting Disciples believed the witness of the women.

On that evening the Risen Jesus suddenly appears to the Eleven less one. Thomas is not with them and is not, therefore, an eyewitness to the Incarnate, Resurrected Son of God. Later, Thomas is told the Good News of the empty tomb and the risen Jehovah-Jesus. *"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" (John 20:25).*

On Easter Sunday, the first day of the week, Thomas is without faith in the risen Lord. For seven days, from Sunday through Saturday, he walks the face of this earth in unbelief. He is, however, no different from humanity as a whole or from you or me or any other individual. In Genesis we read of the unbelief that filled the earth and only eight people (Noah and his family) were to be spared. The Lord told Noah that in after seven days the judgment of God in the form of flooding rains would descend from the heavens and cover the earth. *And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth (Genesis 7:10).*

The eighth day was the day of salvation and only those on the ark saw it and were delivered from the floods of the deep. After the flood waters receded and after a dove returned to the ark with a freshly plucked olive leaf, Noah *waited another seven days, and sent forth* another dove. When the bird did not return it was safe for the octet to leave the ark on the eighth day (Genesis 8:10-11).

At its dedication, the Glory of the Lord filled the Temple and on the eighth day the people of Israel *held a solemn assembly (2 Chronicles 7:9).* Hundreds of years later, the children of Israel returned from the Babylonian Captivity. *And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he* (Ezra) *read from the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance (Nehemiah 8:18).*

And on the eighth day, the Christ Child begins the atoning work as the Sin-bearer. He abides by the Old Testament Law as the Babe of Bethlehem takes humanity's place under the Law and His first Blood is shed. He was circumcised and received the name announced by the angel; the name of Jesus. Three decades later, His life-giving Blood flows freely and completely as He dies on the cross.

Jesus rose again from the dead and entered the eighth day - the eternal day. "For Christ rested in the sepulcher on the Sabbath, that is, during the entire seventh day, but rose again on the day which follows the Sabbath, which is the eighth day and the beginning of a new week, and after it no other day is counted. For through His death Christ has brought to a close the weeks of time and on the eighth day entered into a different kind of life, in which days are no longer counted but there is one eternal day" (Luther).

Christ is risen! He is no longer subject to time or space. And so, a solemn assembly convened on the first Easter evening, on Jesus' eighth day. His Word to them on His eighth day is one of Good News, *Peace be with you!* "May the peace which I wrought for the world in My death on the cross be yours." *Eight 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."*

The gracious Lord Jesus granted an eighth day visit to Thomas. For seven days Thomas lived a faithless life. But seven days offers no hope in this dying world. An eighth day re-creation is essential for life with God. Seven days simply makes one weak; weak to the point of dying. If understood properly, Christians are Eighth Day Adventists. For those who stop at and only count on the seventh day, they miss the eighth day that never ends. They become like the Pharisees who tried to please God and be acceptable in His sight by their observance of and attempts to keep the Law.

Salvation in the ark on the eighth day after seven days of flooding rains in Noah's day, the exit from the ark on the eighth day from the dove's return with the olive branch, the sacramental circumcision of the Old Testament on the eighth day, and the naming of a child on the eighth day all relate to Resurrection and Baptism. God drowned sin in the same waters that He preserved His people in the ark. Noah and family entered a new creation when they left the ark.

The Scriptures declare that *in Him* (Christ) *also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with Him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:11-12).* The apostle proclaims that *we were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a Resurrection like His (Romans 6:4-5).* The Resurrection like His will be one in which we are no longer subjects to days or weeks. We will no longer be plagued by the old sinful nature and the sin which clings so closely.

"The number eight has been associated with Baptism from the earliest days of the church. Ancient sanctuaries were built as octagons, echoing the free-standing baptisteries from still earlier times. To this day, many baptismal fonts are constructed with eight sides." The baptismal font used this morning here at Our Redeemer has eight sides to it. After the Divine Service this morning, I invite all the children to come back into the sanctuary and count the number of sides on this baptismal font. "Our Christian ancestors knew what they were doing. For eight is the number of the new creation. And by Baptism we are newly created to live in the risen life of Christ" (Senkbeil).

Dear people of the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I have been privileged to behold this divine drama unfolding once more. Another human being has been ushered out of eternal death and brought into the life of the eternal eighth day. Savannah, as she continues to live in the seven days of this world's week, now also lives in the promise of the eighth day. Baptism is her and your and my personal eighth day. It is our new creations as daughters and sons of the risen Lord Jesus.

For those who continue to live in their Baptismal grace, there is the blessed knowledge that they live in the eighth day. So, when the day within and of this creation comes when we fall asleep in Christ and our eyes close for the last time in this world - whether it be on Sunday, the first day of the week; or on the Saturday, the seventh day of the week; or any one of the days between; we are already living in and will continually abide in the eighth day. Do you not behold that 'twas on a Friday when

a certain sinner was brought to faith in Jesus the King of the universe and said law-breaker entered his personal eighth day, hearing his Redeemer announce, *Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise (Luke 23:43)* ?

The disciple whom Jesus loved described this place. *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God Who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."*

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night within His temple; and He Who sits upon the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:9-17).

What is your reaction to this wonderful gift given to you from God? Perhaps you feel you don't deserve it. You are right, of course. But remember, your personal eighth day a gift earned for you and given to you. Perhaps you feel that your faithlessness and doubt disqualifies you. You hear Jesus speaking to Thomas and think of yourself: *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.* However, dear people, this is Good News. For do you not hear Jesus inviting you to believe? God's grace is greater than your convicting conscience and He knows all things (1 John 3:20). Do you not hear the Lord's Word directed at Thomas, the other disciples, and you? *Peace be with you!*

Now, what is your reaction to this wonderful gift of the eight day given to you from God? Join with your brother named Thomas and confess Jesus as your Lord and your God! Teach Savannah and the other children to make this good confession. Pray God that you believe it with your mind; hold it in your heart; confess it with your mouth; and live it with your life. Join Job who, while living in his personal eighth day, confessed his place in the great Resurrection that awaits those whose faith is in Christ Jesus: *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last He will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27).* Amen.