"Where is Jesus?" -- Matthew 28:1-8

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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The Festival of the Resurrection **o**f our Lord

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Dear Baptized,

The sermon text for this day is the Gospel Reading, Matthew 28:1-8. Please listen to verses 5-6 as we prepare to address the answer to the question ...

... Where is Jesus?

But the angel answered and said to the women, "Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Thus far the inspired and inerrant Word of the Lord our God.

A. Where was Jesus? (part 1)

On the first day of the week, after the Sabbath Day's rest for Jesus in the tomb and the disciples at home, two women came to the rich man's grave. While they wept and grieved and wondered, one question they did not have was this one: "Where was Jesus?" The location of Jesus' body was not an issue for these two women, Mary Magdelene and the other Mary knew exactly where He was. In order to do what they were intending to do, namely, to prepare Jesus' body for a decent burial, they didn't have to ask anyone the question, "Where was Jesus?" In their own minds they knew exactly where He was.

On Friday they followed Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem, outside the city gate and to the place where He was crucified. These two women, along with John and the other women, were there when they crucified the Lord. Mary Magdelene and the other Mary saw and heard what took place at the cross. Jesus died. At the ninth hour He was dead and His lifeless Body hung on the accursed cross. In addition, these two had been there late on that Friday afternoon when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus laid Jesus' body in the tomb and rolled a large stone to block the entrance.

The Marys were convinced that Jesus was in the tomb. While they were approaching the place of the dead there was a great earthquake. An angel of the Lord had descended from heaven above and rolled the stone from the door of the tomb. It was a great earthquake. The guards experienced their own quaking and became like dead men. The women also were filled with fear. The angel of the Lord said to the women, *Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

B. Where was Jesus? (part 2)

But Jesus wasn't in the tomb. *He is not here.* Well then, where was Jesus? *He is not here; for He is risen as He said.* I don't understand ... where was His Body placed? *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.* Yes I see that He is no longer in the tomb, but where was Jesus' Body taken? *He is risen as He said.* I don't know what you mean. Has someone taken it? Was it the guards? Have they taken away my Lord? I do not know where they have laid Him. *Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

As we read the accounts of the Resurrection of our Lord, at least two things become clear. First, Jesus is risen from the dead. He lives Who once was dead. And second, despite all the places in the Old Testament testifying to the Resurrection of the Christ, despite the restoration of life to Lazaras and the others, and despite all the teachings from the mouth of Jesus about His rising from the dead, the disciples of Jesus did not comprehend what had happened at the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

C. Where will Jesus be? (part 1)

The angel said, *Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.* Now ... yes, now we know where He will be. Jesus will be where He has promised to be. The Word of the Lord, delivered by the messenger of the Lord, indicated that Jesus would be going before them into Galilee. That was His promise. Indeed, days later the eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee. There the gracious and merciful Lord appeared to them and spoke to them and gave the authority to Baptize as well as to treasure and to proclaim the doctrines of the Word to all nations of the world. They were to teach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God and to preach Christ crucified and risen.

Now dear people, if these disciples had, instead of going to Galilee, decided to go to Mount Sinai and live under the Law; or to make a sentimental journey to the Lord's birthplace at Bethlehem; or to grieve their days away at the Arimethean grotto; or to rationalize with the philosophers on Mars Hill; or to tour Tyre and see Sidon they would have disobeyed the Lord and they would have missed being in His gracious presence -- of being in the presence of Him Who wants to bestow His blessings on His people.

To seek Him where He has not promised to be is to deny His Word and to practice unbelief. It is King Saul seeking to know what is forbidden, doing so by means of a witch. It is Judas in worldly sorrow, desiring to cleanse his conscience and cover his guilt by his own work of returning the coins and looking within himself. However, to seek the Lord God where He has promised to be in His grace and mercy is to believe and trust in the promise of His Word. It is King David seeking and receiving the absolution of sin from his pastor. It is Peter in sorrow and contrition repentantly looking to Jesus after the rooster crowed twice and beholding Jesus his Redeemer.

D. Where is Jesus? (part 2)

Well, what about today? Where is Jesus today? The answer is the same as in the days of Matthew: the Lord is graciously and mercifully present where He has promised to be -- in the baptismal promise of His Word, Jesus has promised to be *where two or three are gathered together in His Name (Matthew 18:20)* -- in the place where the servant of Christ and the steward *of the mysteries of*

God (1 Cor. 4:1) announces the forgiveness of sins -- in the place where the Word of Law and Gospel are proclaimed in their truth and purity -- at the Table where Jesus has promised to be ... where His Word is believed, confessed and repeated, *This is My Body; This is My Blood.*

In other words, the crucified and risen Lord Jesus is graciously present with His people as they gather where He has promised to be -- in Word and Sacrament. The Divine Service that takes place here in this building is where and when the Divine serves His people. That means that the highest worship of God is to receive the gifts that He graciously gives to His people.

To seek Him where He has not promised to be is to deny His Word and to practice unbelief. It is the unbeliever who stops by the church a couple times a year -- for Christmas and Easter. It is the senior member who wakes up on Sunday morning and because of sloth and disregard, makes an excuse for not coming to church and lives out the will of the Evil One for that day. It is the youth who delves into the ouija board and reads the horoscope while at the same time avoiding Word read by the called reader. It is the child who talks his parents out of entering into holy place and excluding the family from the presence of the Lord God Almighty. It is the mom or dad who succumbs to such natural, sinful whining and becomes subservient to a spoiled child. You see, this is what you are saying when you do such things is this: "Lord, I do not need to be in Your gracious presence today. I do not wish to hear about the forgiveness that You won for me in Your awful suffering on the cross. I don't want to hear about Your Resurrection. I don't need to drink the Water of Life nor to be fed the Bread from Heaven."

To such a one as these and indeed, to all of you, I sincerely invite and truly beg you to be in the Divine Service next Sunday and every Sunday.

Where is Jesus? Dear friends, He is here ... among us ... present with His people. You need not search any longer for He is risen and He is here. To seek the Lord God where He has promised to be in His grace and mercy is to believe and trust in the promise of His Word.

In the midst of a life that may be physically painful, it is the old man seeking and receiving the absolution of sin when announced from the Lord's undershepherd. In the midst of this world of death, the Lord is presence here with the woman who grieves the loss of a loved one and who hears the Good News that Jesus is here and she is given the certain hope of the Resurrection of the dead. Jesus is with the boy who enters the Church, sees the baptismal font, and joins the Church in the Invocation of the Lord. The risen Lord is graciously present with the mom who has her children in the holy place even though she might not be able to hear an entire sermon for years. She rejoices that the Lord is here for her and for her children.

To such a one as these and indeed, to all of you, I sincerely invite and truly beg you to be in the Divine Service next Sunday and every Sunday.

"Behold, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples.

Where was Jesus?
On the cross where He died and in the tomb where He was buried.

Where was Jesus?
He is no longer in the tomb for He rose from the dead.

Where is Jesus?
Right where He has promised to be. Right here! Amen.