Luke 24:6-7
The Resurrection of Our Lord • April 8, 2007
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church • Boise, Idaho
Pastor Tim Pauls
Three Days to Eternity

The Word of the Lord from Luke 24: "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" This is the Word of the Lord.

I. The Eleven's Triduum

Friday, Saturday, Sunday. What a roller-coaster for the eleven disciples.

Friday started badly and only grew worse: it was during the night, after Friday began, that Jesus was arrested in the Garden. As the hours passed, He suffered trials and beatings. By afternoon, the sky grew black as He hung dying on the cross, jeered by man and cursed by God. It was a far cry from the triumphal entry to palms and Hosannas just five days before. Now Jesus was dead. The disciples knew about death—they'd even heard Jesus predict His own several times. But death is an uncomfortable topic to meet head-on, so they'd always found a way to get around discussing it as they should. But now, in just that Friday, possibility had become violent reality. Jesus was dead, His body laid in a tomb. The disciples had fled. That's how Friday ended. But no matter how it looked, you know how Friday came to a close: the Son of God, become flesh, had died on that cross for the sins of the world. He'd died there to redeem you.

Saturday came, whether the eleven wanted or not. How did they spend Saturday? The Bible doesn't tell us. One can only imagine that Saturday seemed to last forever, the sun moving past in excruciating slow motion. One can only speculate on their thoughts and emotions on Saturday. Grief would be one, because they had lost the Teacher who had declared them to be His friends. Bitterness and guilt would be there, because they'd pledged their loyalty to Jesus, even to death, and then run away when confronted with the threat. Shock would be another, because Jesus had been killed in such a brutal, gruesome way. Fear would follow quickly—for if the Teacher had been put to death by those in power, wouldn't it make sense for them to tidy up by killing His students, too? With that maelstrom of thought and regret, there's little doubt that the disciples were less than one step away from total despair. Jesus was in the grave…or was He? Once again, and so important: whatever the disciples felt or perceived in their despair, Jesus was not given over to death and corruption. The work of redemption was complete; so, like the first week of creation, this Saturday was a day of rest from His labors. From what we know from Scripture, this is when the Lord descended into hell—not to suffer, but to declare His victory to the spirits in prison. Nothing quite so proclaims a victory as entering the enemy's palace unhindered, saying what you want to say. So Jesus entered into hell and proclaimed His victory there—to show that neither death nor hell could hold Him. To proclaim that death and hell can no longer hold you. While the eleven agonized through

that long Saturday—because they'd forgotten what Jesus had said, Jesus remained their Savior even if they thought He was only dead.

Then, Sunday. The women found a rolled stone, an empty tomb and angels. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" they chided, and declared the Good News: "He is not here, but is risen!" He is risen indeed. It's not that just His memory lives on, so that people can do what they think is right and say they're following Jesus. It's not that only His soul is alive, free-floating somewhere apart from His flesh. The tomb is empty! Christ is risen, body and all! This, dear friends, is huge. Way back in the Garden of Eden, God created Adam and Eve to live forever in both body and soul. Sin brought death to both, to the whole of them. If Jesus is risen only in soul, it means that He hasn't completely beaten sin and reversed the curse. But He is risen—fully, wholly risen. So on that day, His angels told the women to tell the disciples, and to send them toward Galilee where they'd see Him. After all, He'd conquered sin and death and hell for them.

Just as He has conquered sin and death and hell for you.

II. You

Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

Friday—dying.

Saturday—rest.

Sunday—resurrection.

Your life in this world is an ongoing Friday. In the context of beer commercials and pop culture, this sounds like a good thing, since everybody's working for the weekend. But your life in this world is in the context of Good Friday, when the darkness of death is approaching, and no work of yours can stop that. It's considered impolite, depressing, to spend much time talking about death if you don't have to in our culture, and yet you spend your life with it always in the back of your mind. That's why you look both ways before you cross the street and make sure the mayonnaise hasn't gone bad. That's why you go see your doctor for all those unpleasant preventive exams—or purposely avoid going to the doctor for them. That's why you try to get some exercise, count the calories and keep your blood pressure in check. It's why you bombard your kids with all sorts of rules to keep them safe. Life in this world doesn't just happen: even though death is the most unnatural thing in God's plan for this world, life in a dying world doesn't naturally go on. It's a precious, fragile gift from God. God willing, you'll still be here tomorrow, but you can't be sure. It takes vigilance, hard work and the Lord's mercy to stay alive when your existence is an ongoing Friday in a dying world.

So even if you don't talk or consciously think about death all that much, you plan your day against it. Everyone does—everyone has to, because all are born in sin. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God…and the wages of sin is death. The world seeks to cope with this in different ways: it tries to make death a friend or seeks scientific

breakthroughs to avoid dying in the first place. But it's always the shadow at the edge of everyone's vision. But as for you, you do not despair. You know about Good Friday. You know that Jesus Christ has suffered death to conquer death for you—and you know that Christ is risen from the dead…for you. Therefore, even though it will be given you—at times in a Friday world—to suffer and grieve and eventually die, despair is not for you. While you bear your cross, the risen Lord is with you now. He speaks forgiveness to you in His Word. He gives you His risen body and blood in His Supper. He promises that nothing and no one can snatch you out of His hand…not even death itself. Death remains an enemy, yes, but a conquered one. It is an enemy under Jesus' feet, and He uses it to deliver you from this world of darkening Friday to life forever with Him. Your Friday does not last forever, and it is not the end. In Christ, life awaits because He is risen.

Saturday is the day of rest. It is the day between dying and rising. For us on Friday, it looks bleak. But you hear your Savior speak His Word, and there is joy in the midst of grief. When Jesus came into the room of Jairus' daughter, He declared, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping" (Lk. 8:52). When He told His disciples of Lazarus' death, He said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I might wake him up" (Jn. 11:11). Time and time again in the New Testament, the Lord declares that those who die in Christ are not dead, but asleep in Jesus. It can be no other way: you have already died with Christ and been raised up in Holy Baptism, so there is no death left for you now—only sleep. In other words, when their bodies fail in this world, Christians are not cut off from the Lord of life forever, for that would be eternal death. Rather, their bodies sleep until Sunday, while their souls are already with the Lord. They sleep until the Lord calls them forth at the Resurrection. So as you prepare for your Saturday, remember that grief and pain and fear are Friday trials, and their days are numbered. In Christ, your days are not. For you, Saturday is a day of rest that lasts the blink of an eye because Christ is risen and has promised to raise you—fully refreshed, fully healed, fully restored. When you grieve those who have died in Christ, it is a comfort that they no longer suffer. They rest. That's what you tell your friends and loved ones now about yourself as one redeemed: you joyfully declare now that Christ, who died for your sins, is risen from the dead—and so He will raise you, too. That way, if you precede us, those of us who remain stuck grieving on Friday for a while are comforted that you are not lost. You are asleep in Jesus, awaiting eternal life. That is why, while we grieve, we do not mourn as those who have no hope. Like Friday, Saturday does not last forever. Sunday is coming.

Sunday is coming. That is your hope. That's why you're here. As St. Paul declares in today's epistle, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." If there is no resurrection, then Jesus doesn't really matter because this life is all there is. But this is not so. Christ is risen from the dead, and He is risen for you. He has borne your sins to the cross and destroyed their power so that they cannot condemn you. He has taken on every pain and sickness that you suffer in this Friday world and put them to death in Himself. He has conquered the devil so that the evil one has no hold on you. And now Christ is risen from the dead so that He might raise you, too: free from sin. Free from sickness, pain and every other curse that afflicts this life. Free from death—forever. He declares, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he who believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-

26). He proclaims, “Death, I will be the death of you. Grave, I will be your destruction! (Hosea 13:14). Saturday’s sleep can be a relief after a Friday of affliction. But Sunday’s resurrection—that is your hope: Christ is risen and will raise you, too.

This is not a maybe. This is a sure thing. It is all already yours. In Baptism, Jesus has already joined you to Himself. He has joined you to His death for your sin by water and the Word, so that you do not have to suffer God’s wrath and die for your sin. He has joined you to His tomb, so that—like His—your grave will be empty on the Last Day, too. And He has most certainly joined you to His Resurrection, so that you might be raised to live forever.

Already, He is with you alway, now on this darkening Friday.

Because He is with you now, with grace, your Saturday is sleep, not death.

And your Sunday, your Day of Resurrection, is sure; because Christ is risen.

It is all sure, dear Christians, because if Christ has died and Christ is risen, then you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen