

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lena, IL – 9 April 2023
Easter Day - Year A

1st Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Psalm: 118:1-2, 14-24

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-10

Sermon - *Vicar Thomas J. Mosbø*

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This verse from our Psalm this morning is a very popular one, and I see it on plaques and cards and on people's posts on Facebook. And in those contexts it is usually intended to mean that every day is a day that the Lord has made, and that we should appreciate every day and thank God for every day we have. And this is a fine thought.

But the writer of our Psalm this morning had something much more specific in mind. It seems to have been written originally for a festive celebration in Jerusalem after God had delivered Israel from a devastating calamity. Yet the author, who is not named, also seems to be looking far ahead to an even greater day. And so we can now proclaim:

This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Today is the greatest of all days, when our Lord and Saviour rose from the dead, when God made his most wonderful miracle happen, delivering all of us who trust in Jesus Christ from the devastating calamity of death.

Jesus himself quoted parts of this Psalm in the days leading up to his death and resurrection, and would have sung the whole Psalm with his disciples at his last Passover supper the night before he was crucified. Indeed, we also sing a part of this Psalm every time we celebrate the Last Supper in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The portion of the Psalm we read this morning ends with the verse I have been quoting, but let me read what comes after this verse:

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD!
Hosanna in the highest!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.

²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

Jesus, of course, was himself the festal sacrifice, and he was:

The stone that the builders rejected
who has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

The builders, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, had the opportunity to recognise him as the Messiah, God's anointed, but they chose instead to reject him and crucify him. And, as Paul wrote, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." He has become the cornerstone of the new eternal life God has promised those who trust him.

And I read recently that Psalm 118 was also Martin Luther's favourite Psalm, and he took verse 17 as his own motto:

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

Yes, this is God's promise, that we shall not die, but live, because Jesus lives, never to die again. And we as the church declare this marvelous work whenever we worship together, hear his Word, and share in his feast of Holy Communion. And so, in this faith, let us rejoice and be glad in this day that the LORD has made.
Alleluia! Christ is risen!

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