

Easter Guarantees!

Luke 24:1-12

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

If you came expecting to only hear that you are lost and condemned, listen instead to what God says: By faith, you are found! You are forgiven! You are made alive in Christ! If you came to mourn, then let your sorrow turn to joy, because Jesus is not in the tomb; He is risen! Death could not hold Him! Sin could not defeat Him! Satan has lost, and Christ has won! This means that today, right here, right now, your victory is complete in Him! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Today, we remember and celebrate that death is defeated, new life is ours, and Christ is here with us.

These are our **Easter Guarantees!** Our Lord Jesus Christ has taken it upon Himself to sacrifice everything in genuine love for us. Since Christ has done all this for us, our time is best spent on the reality of our new life in Him that was won on the third day. As the Psalmist says, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).

I. You Are Found!

As the familiar hymn goes, we were lost and now we are found. Since the fall of Adam, humanity as a whole has been rebellious against our Lord. Like prisoners locked in a cell with no key and no key-holders, we were trapped in our sin, bound in death, and utterly incapable of freeing ourselves from the grip of sin, death, and the devil. But into this prison of complete hopelessness came the One who broke the chains. God Himself stepped into the brokenness not just to open the door of the prison cell, but to take our chains, take our punishment, and suffer our well-deserved execution. This is how much He loves and cares for His created beings. All this He did for the sins of the entire world.

On Good Friday, it looked as though sin, death, and the devil had won as Christ hung on the cross, bleeding for our sake. He hung His head, declaring it to be finished, and His lifeless body was sealed in the tomb. Surely Satan thought that he had secured us to be children of wrath for all eternity. But Easter morning shattered every lie of Satan! The prison doors flew open! The stone was rolled away! Indeed, it was finished! Death lost its grip, because Christ is alive!

It is this work of the Lord that has taken us from being lost to being found. It is as Christ Himself says to Zacchaeus, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). You see, Christ did not just set us free so that we would be left to our own devices. His death and resurrection are not an enabling for us to finish the job. We are found! This means that Jesus has called us by name, written our names in the Book of Life, and covered us with His very own blood. Our intercessor, who became like us, has made us His. Yes, we are no longer prisoners. And with that freedom, we have become members of His kingdom, no longer dead in sin, but in

faith, made fully alive in Him who died and rose from the dead. Like sheep, our great Shepherd holds us securely to carry us to Heaven.

As a result, Easter morning cannot be reduced to some trivial moment in history for us to look back at and think of fondly. It cannot be reduced to a historical event just like any other that we think about for a while and move on to the next. Easter is a present reality that extends to all days of our lives and changes everything for us today and for all eternity. Since sin no longer has any bearing on us because of Christ breaking its stranglehold, the evil one's claims of "guilty" are empty words if we have faith in Jesus. Because Jesus lives, we too live.

Our text for this morning states,

"And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.' And they remembered his words,"

It is because of this very real account that we do not need to live in fear, and we do not grieve like those who have no hope. Christ's resurrection is our confidence, our peace, and our joy. Today is not a day for sorrow, but a day for thankfulness, not a day for despair, but a day for faith. The grave is empty. Christ is victorious. And because of Him, we have forgiveness and life that will never end.

II. You Are Forgiven!

Colossians 2:13-15 says,

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Him."

Imagine a man who owes his bank a billion dollars. Now this man knows he can never repay it without a miracle, really, what person could? Day after day, the consequences of this weigh heavily on him. He considers the loss of everything he has, from his house to his car, and possibly even his family. Out of nowhere, a letter arrives from his bank. He opens it, knowing for certain that it will be from the debt collection department. To his surprise, inside is a notice that his entire debt has been forgiven. "Paid in full," it says.

Any person in their right mind would, of course, celebrate and move on refreshed and relieved. But not this man. Instead of celebrating, he paces in his home, letter in hand, reading it repeatedly. Day after day, he says to his wife, "Surely the bank made a mistake, and they will change their mind!" One day, he finally goes to the bank and asks, "Are you sure I'm free from

this debt? Is there anything I need to do to make sure it's really forgiven?" The banker, confused as to what this man is rambling on about, smiles and says, "Sir, what debt?"

You see, that's how the forgiveness of God won in Christ Jesus our Lord works. When Christ paid the price for our transgressions, he paid it in full. He paid our debt in such a way that it is as if that debt never even existed. This is how it must be for a perfectly just God. He canceled our debt and nailed it to the cross as Paul stated in Colossians. There is no condition to it and no memory of it.

As the psalmist says, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-11). God doesn't forgive with conditions, as we tend to do when forgiving others. He doesn't say, "I forgive, but I won't forget." He doesn't hold past sins over our heads, waiting for us to prove ourselves worthy. It is simple: by faith, you are forgiven in Christ. Completely.

So, if Christ has truly set you free, why live as if you are still burdened by guilt? Why live like the man who can't believe that his debt has been forgotten? Why carry a weight that Jesus has already taken for you? The resurrection is God's proof that your sins are fully and forever forgiven. Since you are forgiven, you are alive in Christ!

III. You Are Made Alive in Christ!

In your Baptism, you have been granted a washing of regeneration that remains with you forever. This Sacrament instituted by God is for the forgiveness of your sins. It's plain and simple. Though some tragically turn away from this gift, God's promises do not fail. He holds you firmly in His grace, and in Him, you are secure. 2nd Corinthians 5:17-18 says,

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

The sufferings of this life (the old that has passed away) cannot be compared to the glory that awaits us in Heaven with Him. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, there is life beyond this life. Beyond death, there is an eternal joy, where there will be no more sin, sorrow, pain, sickness, or death. Instead, there will be pleasures forevermore, unending joy in the Lord. Yes, we still endure suffering in this life, but as Paul says, "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18).

This is the miracle of Easter. It is not just that Christ is alive, but that you are alive in Him! The old has passed away, and so Christ did not raise you from the dead to leave you unchanged or to be left to a life of ease. He rose to give you a life where who you are and what

you do is always about this amazing gift of forgiveness and salvation that you have in Him. This is our present reality and not just a future hope. It is a hope for the time and place where there is a fullness of joy, a joy that never ends.

Luther said in his 1532 Easter Sermon,

“For He has not risen for His own sake, but for our benefit, that through Him, we too may obtain righteousness, victory, and eternal life. This is the great joy of Easter, that Christ is not merely alive, but that His life is our life; His victory is our victory; His righteousness is our righteousness. He is not risen alone; He has raised us with Him.”

That is why Easter is not just a celebration. It is God’s seal upon every promise He has made to you in His Word and His Sacraments. As Jesus says in John 14:9, “Because I live, you also will live.” His resurrection is not just proof that He conquered death—it is proof that you will, too. Just as Christ stepped out of the grave, so also will all who are in Him rise to eternal life. On the Last Day, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will stand in the presence of our Savior, body and soul united and perfect, to live with Him forever. This is certain. This is the greatest of our **Easter Guarantees!**

Amen.

Pastor Lucas Abbott