

“As He Said”

If you know how it ends, it changes things. With the stoppage of almost all sporting events, some of you have resorted to watching the old Husker football games on YouTube. As someone mentioned the other day as he selected a game to watch – he wondered if we won that game – otherwise, he wasn’t going to waste his time. If you know how it ends – it changes things.

Of course, the same could be said with this pandemic. Who knows how it will end. You hear all kinds of things from all kinds of experts – but since it is a novel virus – no one can say for sure. We are relegated to seeing how things have gone in other countries – tracking models – looking back at the SARS outbreak, and the Spanish Flu. If you knew how all this would end – it would change what you’re doing today.

And so it is with the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. For us who have walked with Christ through His Passion every Holy Week – it’s easy, hindsight is 20/20 – we know how it ends. But for the disciples and the women who walked with Christ through His suffering, crucifixion and death – it was anything but easy.

When the women come to the tomb that Easter morning – the message they hear from the angel of the Lord is straightforward – “[Jesus] is not here, for He has risen, as He said.”

“As He said.” Yes, Jesus had told His followers ahead of time that all this would happen. At least three times He clearly told His disciples that – “The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and He will be raised on the third day.”

In other words, they should have known how all of this would end – and it should have changed things – but it didn’t. Why is that? Because in the midst of the turmoil and chaos of this life – what God has said to us, what He promises – is forced into the background.

The disciples were confronted with a crowd of soldiers with swords and clubs – and so they scattered. Peter was put on the spot, and rather than risk his life by being associated with Jesus – he denied Him, three times. These women come to the tomb expecting to find a corpse to care for – because they had seen Jesus suffer and die – and they saw where He was buried.

But early in the morning, with sleep in their eyes – they are met with a great earthquake and an angel of the Lord who appeared like lightning with clothes as white as snow – descending from heaven, and rolling back the stone from the tomb. Even the soldiers guarding the tomb trembled in fear and fell down as dead men

But for the women a word – a Word from God – “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.”

Seeing that His body was not there – hearing that He had been raised to life – seeing the Resurrected Jesus – with fear and great joy they departed from the tomb and ran to tell His disciples. They go to tell the disciples – what they should already have known.

Just “as He said.” Has not our Lord told us that there would be much suffering in these Last Days – that we must pass through much toil and tribulation to enter into His kingdom? The disciple is not above his Master – so if our Lord and Master Jesus Christ has suffered – shouldn’t we expect to suffer as well?

You know how all this ends. The Lord Jesus Christ has told you that the heavens and the earth are passing away. Today God told you to – “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

You know, and believe, that the ascended Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. You have heard, and believe His promise – that He will come again and will take you to Himself, that where He is, you may be also.

“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out.” In Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven – and where there is the forgiveness of sins – there is the resurrection of your body, and the life everlasting. Just “as He said.”

In these days, the words and promises of God are forced into the background by fear, suffering, isolation, anxiety, and the chaos of this fallen world. So our Lord Jesus Christ patiently comes to us – again and again – revealing Himself to us, setting aside our fear, and delivering what He has always promised.

Dearly beloved, even though you die, yet shall you live – and even though your body is placed into its tomb – Christ Himself will come and resurrect your body – so that you may live with Him in the glory of heaven forever – just as He said.

So that you may face these days – not in fear, but in faith, with Easter Joy – the resurrected Christ comes to you again today. Here is my resurrected Body and Blood. I am not dead – I am alive. Eat and drink and receive the forgiveness I have won for you in my suffering and death – and with it, I give you life everlasting.

That is how it ends – and so that is how we live – in faith – communing with our Lord Jesus Christ, and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, and for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.