

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

Everyone knows that **Easter is a true festival of joy**. However, few know **the real reason behind that joy**. If you think that this misunderstanding applies only to those who are not Christian, you'd be wrong. This failure to understand the true joy of Easter also applies to those who are practicing Christians, who are acquainted with God's Word and derive joy from it. They know very well the source of the true joy of Christmas, but Easter is another matter altogether.

People usually think that on Easter, **Christians rejoice** that (1), the time of Christ's humiliation and great suffering has finally ended and His day of honor has arrived. It's the lowest point, emotionally (on Good Friday), followed by the highest of highs. This contrast leads to great joy. (2), by His resurrection, His innocence, His divinity and the truth of His Word were undeniably confirmed; and (3), the resurrection of Christ establishes beyond doubt the immortality of the human soul and the future resurrection of human bodies.

Holy Scripture certainly identifies all of these as fruits of the resurrection of Jesus. Regarding (1), it says: *"He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"*(Philippians 2:8). On point (2), it notes, *"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit"*(1 Timothy 3:16), and Christ *"was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead"*(Romans 1:4). Scripture says this about (3): *"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"*(1 Corinthians 15:12).

As important as all of this is, however, it **does not relate fully, the true source of Easter comfort and joy**. For **all three points**—the glorification of Christ, the confirmation of His doctrine, and the assurance of the immortality of the human soul and the resurrection of the dead—**Christ's death and resurrection was by no means absolutely necessary. God could have glorified Jesus in other ways**. Both His doctrine and His divinity had already been sufficiently confirmed by **His glorious miracles**. The immortality of man and the resurrection of the flesh were, without doubt, long established with the resurrection of Lazarus, the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, and individuals whose stories are related in the Old Testament.

The **true object of the Christian's Easter joy** is something **completely different**. The points already noted are nothing more than the frame of the real picture. **Holy Scripture presents the resurrection of Christ as absolutely necessary for the work of the redemption and salvation of man**. The apostle Paul clearly says: *"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished"*(1 Corinthians 15:14,18). From this, we must conclude that Christ's resurrection is not only a stone in the building of our salvation, but the cornerstone of it. It is not a shining jewel in the crown of our redemption, but the crown itself. **Without Christ's resurrection, the world would still not be redeemed**. With the resurrection of Christ, a person can rejoice in His birth, be comforted with His suffering and death, and boast in His cross.

Therefore we can sing this Easter, "*Eternal is the gift He brings. Therefore our heart with rapture sings: 'Christ has triumphed! He is living!' Now still He comes to give us life; and by His presence stills all strife. Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*" (LSB Hymn 465, st. 2).

May this Easter be to you, personally, a time of great joy and comfort. For you were lost, and now you are saved; you were perishing, and now you've been redeemed. Alleluia!

Pastor Travis