

SERMON FOR EASTER 2020

TEXT: EXODUS 15: 1-2

THEME: SINGING A NEW SONG

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. ² The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

Christ has risen, He has risen indeed!

A number of years ago our youth group went to the Synod's National Youth Gathering in New Orleans. New Orleans is known for a great many things, food, partying, and music, particularly jazz. As we were being bused from the airport to our hotel, our guide told us to be on the lookout for something else that is unique to New Orleans. It is called the "Jazz Funeral."

We never saw a Jazz Funeral, but I understand it is quite the sight to see in New Orleans. When people die in the city of New Orleans, they like to celebrate the person's life as much as the mourning of their death. The typical jazz funeral begins at a church or funeral home and leads its way to the cemetery. On the way, the mourners are joined by a brass band that starts out sad and heavy, but soon breaks into celebration. Everyone dances. Everyone sings. One particular favorite song, well, you know it, "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Celebrating in the face of death is what we are called to do today, to break out into singing in the midst of sadness and despair, for God the Father sent Jesus to be our Savior, and Christ has defeated death on this Easter for Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!

That is what God's people do, we sing to the Lord in the face of death and despair, for God is in control, He loves us and our God lives! In the Old Testament lesson for today Moses breaks out into singing, and no one can stop him! He sings praises and glory to God! Why? He sings because God had seen the despair of His people in Egypt. He heard their cries and groans under the yoke of slavery. God sent Moses, who along with his brother Aaron spoke God's Word of deliverance to hard headed and hard hearted Pharaoh. "Let My people go!" But Pharaoh would not listen. God sent plagues, ten in all, the final one on the first Day of Passover, where the Angel of the Lord passed over the homes that took God's offer of salvation to heart, placing blood of a lamb on their doorpost. But to those did not heed the Word of the Lord, death came to their firstborn.

Pharaoh relented. "Get out!" was his cry. Moses and the people of God left Egypt in haste. But Pharaoh would not give up. He pursued

God's people, backing them into a corner, Pharaoh and his mighty armies in front of Israel, and the impassable Red Sea behind them.

Pharaoh thought he had won, he had Moses and the people of God right where he wanted them. But he didn't know the One True God! With a mighty wind God parted the Red sea and the people of God passed through that Sea on dry land safely to the other side. With Pharaoh in hot pursuit, and the people of God now in safety, God saved His people by reversing the direction of the wind, drowning their enemies right before their eyes.

Moses was delighted, as were the people of God. They thought that they were dead men walking but the One True God saves, giving them life and salvation! It is no wonder that they broke out in song, and Moses led the singing. This is the stanza Moses sang went like this: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. ² The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."

The disciples on that first Easter morning didn't feel like singing a new song to the Lord. The pall of death hung over them like a thick cloud. For three years they had followed Jesus, saw Him perform

miracles, they had thought that He was the Messiah, the One sent from God. Even John the Baptist asked Jesus “are you the One to come or are we to look for another?” But their hopes were shattered. In just a few short hours they saw their fellow disciple Judas betray Jesus in the Garden, they witnessed Jesus being dragged off to court. Peter denied Him, others hid in fear as Jesus hung on the cross. When Jesus gave up His Spirit, the skies darkened and the earth shook. He was buried hurriedly in a freshly cut tomb. All of them hid in fear.

Early that Sunday women made their way to the tomb to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. The shroud of death draped over them. Jesus had raised Lazarus and others from death to life, He even called Himself the Resurrection and the Life. But on this early Sunday morning it looked like Death seemingly had won.

But angels appeared on the scene. They had Good News. Their first words were: “Don’t be afraid.” Why? Because Jesus was not here, He had risen from the grave, just as He had promised! The women who first saw the open tomb went to tell the disciples. Peter and John ran to the tomb. Jesus was not there! He had conquered death! Jesus was alive! The Lord Jesus struck once again; only this time He delivered a deathblow to sin, Satan and death. The horse and rider called Death and

Satan had been defeated. The disciples had a song in their heart and they lived it in their lives. The Apostle Paul was able to sing: "Death has been swallowed up in victory! Thanks be to God He gives us victory over death in Christ!"

This Easter is a different kind of Easter, though, isn't it? Daily we hear news that death is winning. Jobs are lost, the economy is halted, and people are sheltered in place. The number of hospitalizations are rising daily because of the Coronavirus. Our national leaders have stated that this week will be the worst week this nation as seen in this generation. The Surgeon General has said that this week is akin to our Pearl Harbor. Others have said its another kind of 9/11. The death toll continues to rise. Death seems irreversible and permanent; especially when we see temporary morgues set up in cities and when we ourselves stand at the graveside of a loved one who has died.

But there is a new song that is being sung. Don't you hear it? Listen to the Good News of the angels. Let that Good News sink into your heart and soul. This Good News changes life. It is a new reality that God has given to us by His grace. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The Holy Spirit has put a new song in our hearts. Even though Satan and death rear their ugly heads the Good News is that Christ is

risen. Not that He has risen, in the past for those who were with Him in His life and ministry. He is risen. Jesus still lives. Death still rears its ugly head. Satan uses it to bring fear and anxiety into our lives. The old Liar the Devil wants us to believe that we have no hope, no future, that death has the last word. But Jesus has the last word. It is finished!

God's message to you is that Christ is risen! This Good News address your life and mine in these troubling times, for we know that Jesus not only loves us but He lives to be our very present Help in times of trouble. Jesus is not dead but lives and now puts a new song in our hearts. This is the truth that Job sang about in the Old Testament. In the midst of his suffering, he did not lose faith but continued to trust in the love of God. It was Job who first sang: I Know that my Redeemer lives! And the Good News today for you and the world we live in is this:

Our Redeemer lives! He lives, triumphant from the grave, He lives eternally to save, He lives to bless me with His love and plead for me above. He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears. He lives to grant me rich supply, He lives to guide me with His eye, and He lives to comfort me when faint, He lives to hear my soul's complaint. He lives to silence all my fears, He lives to wipe away my tears, He lives to calm my troubled heart, and He lives all blessings to impart. He lives

and while He lives I will sing, for Jesus is my Savior, my Lord, my King!

Amen