

tomb even to you. According to our text, to whom are the women to proclaim this good news of victory? The angels say: “Tell his disciples.” But what were the disciples? Poor, weak, sinful men, who had forsaken their Master in his need. Do you also have an evil conscience because of your life, then you are not excluded, if Christ alone is what you long for. Yes, it is surpassingly noteworthy that the angel not only says: “Tell his disciples,” but he especially adds to it, “and Peter.” Why does he probably do that? Peter had disgracefully denied his LORD and Master three times. He had fallen deeply. He needed comfort. He probably considered himself the least worthy of them all.

Learn from this the greatness of the grace of the resurrection. It should be proclaimed to all, but especially to the deeply fallen. So if there is anyone among us who may have already practically given up all hope for salvation because his conscience tells him that he is the most disgraceful of all sinners, so must I, indeed, as a servant of JESUS Christ, present to this entire assembly the victory of JESUS Christ over your sins; but to the person among us who here considers himself as the most unworthy and most lost, I must call out to him above any one else, in the Name of JESUS Christ: O, most deeply fallen sinner, why do you want to despair? Christ is almighty, he has shredded all the bands of sins and condemnation through his resurrection. You have not fallen too deeply for him. He extends his saving hand even to you in the depths of your desolation. You must today appear as his prize in his triumph parade. He calls to you: “Only confess your transgression, and receive me in faith, so your sins are taken away in the power of my death, and the power of my resurrection bestows upon you perfect righteousness.”

O, then all of you cry out with me:

JESUS, you sprang the locked door  
 which barred my way, naked, poor,  
 And in the tomb, the stone, the seal  
 Saw naught that your life could steal.  
 Set my heart forever free,  
 Ever opened unto Thee.

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### **Early Service Easter Day.** [FK 229]

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Praise to you, LORD JESUS Christ, almighty victorious prince, for on this day you had arisen from your grave and, thereby, taken away the power of death and brought life and immortality to light. All the angels praise you, all the archangels exalt you, all heavenly thrones and principalities and powers bow before you. We also pray to you in dust and confess before all the world that you are our LORD and our God.

O rise now also, you glorious conqueror of sins, of death and of the grave, and sit upon your throne, even in our hearts. Let us experience the power of your resurrection, awaken us also out of the death of our souls, raise us up from our dust

and show us the glory that you secured for us at that time through your death and life from the grave.

Yes, in this festival tear our hearts free from the trivialities of this earth, and help us, that each of us, when he has heard the announcement of your life on this day, might finally, from the experience of his heart, cry out: "Now I believe, now I know, now I have also experienced it: The LORD is risen, he is risen, indeed!" Amen. Amen.

Precious, most joyous hearers!

Today is the day when a Christian exalts, and the world, sins, death and the grave can only try to mount their clever opposition. Today is the day when the despised confessor of the Gospel can joyfully lift up his head and proudly and boldly bear witness that he believes with glad confidence on the One who once on Golgotha died for him on the cross. Today's the day when believers can challenge all the doubts and objections of those who mock the Christian faith and march quick time out to the field of battle to meet all the assortment of their most pointed weapons against Christ and his church. "The LORD is risen! He is risen, indeed," of course, is the divine, confident cry of the Christian. And, therefore, he can also cry out triumphantly with David: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is done by the LORD and is wondrous in our sight." For the resurrection of JESUS Christ, this greatest of all miracles, is the mainstay of the whole construct of Christian doctrine that can never be shaken by any means. Indisputably, it reveals Christ and the eternal rock upon which the church and the congregation is built, whom even the gates of hell cannot overwhelm.

Of course the resurrection of JESUS Christ establishes the truth of the Christ's Words upon a pillar of certainty that could not be higher. Even long before his death Christ had foretold it in the presence of his enemies, that when the temple of his body would be destroyed, with his own hand he would build it up again on the third day. He had announced it to his disciples long before, with clear Words, that he would be handed over to the Gentiles, spit upon, mocked, scourged and crucified and die, but he would rise again on the third day, and behold! – what he foretold beforehand, came to most perfect fulfillment. Given into the hands of sinners, Christ finally passed away on the cross. So that no doubt remain as to the actual achievement of death, after his passing, his heart was pierced through with a spear and then his stiff body was laid into a cold tomb. Every hope the LORD had given concerning his revivification had vanished from the hearts of the disciples. That had been shattered by his endless torments. They were already mourning him as one who was gone forever. And behold! No sooner had the dawn of the third day brightened the highest hill tops of Palestine, Christ broke forth out of the night of the grave, full of life, suddenly shining out again in dazzling glory. Angels descended from above to roll the stone away that had been placed and sealed over the tomb, to show that the grave was empty. The earth shook, since the prince of life had renewed his footsteps upon her. Dear saints who were sleeping emerged from the open doors of their tombs and appeared in the holy city. Deathly fear filled

the soldiers keeping watch over the holy grave. They lay there lifeless, struck down as by thunder and lightening from above that proceeded from the angels that had come down to them. Finally they woke up again and ran into the city and, trembling, proclaimed what they had seen and heard, and filled all the foes of Christ with fear and terror by their news. But now the resurrected One appeared for forty days at various places to his own, and at last to a whole gathering of five hundred souls, until he, finally, visibly rose up from the earth as his disciples were watching and, being received by a throne of clouds, amidst the victory songs of many thousands of angels, closed the gates of this visible world behind him.

So? When we see Christ today in the light of such majesty, how could we still doubt that he, who died on the cross, is to be worshiped as the Son of God? Should the streams of glory that beam forth from him today not compel us to cast ourselves at the feet of JESUS to cry out as did Thomas: "My LORD and my God?" What Words of Christ do we still want to doubt after he fulfilled the greatest of all his Words: "I have the authority to lay down my life and authority to take it up again."

Away, away with all doubts this day! "The LORD is risen!" This Word tells us that Christ is truly the almighty, who can even save from death and distribute life and salvation. And since it was the heavenly Father who set free the One given as our security from death's prison, so it is, therefore, certain: Christ has truly reconciled us on the cross with the Father, his bloody sacrifice has been accepted by God for the sins of the world, his payment for the debt of all sinners has been paid, the world is truly redeemed, death overcome, hell destroyed, eternal life prepared and heaven, access is granted to the throne of grace, yes, the heart of the Father has been opened to all, to all.

Oh that we, therefore, might on this day stare deeply into the glory into which Christ has preceded us, only to pave the way to it for us! Oh that on this day we might rise with Christ above the dust and might satisfy ourselves in the great hope that Christ's return from the land of death has retrieved for us into this valley of mortality! Let us now, in faith, call upon him for such blessings on this feast, etc.

**Text: Mark 16. 1 – 8.**

The resurrection of JESUS Christ, which we are commended to consider by the present festival and all the texts appointed for the day, direct the eyes of our spirit above the earth, into that invisible country where Christ returned, as did that first messenger. So today, as on that holy Easter day, we see the barrier between time and eternity giving way, the doors of that other world open themselves wide before our souls and afford us an opportunity by faith to look into that which no man has ever seen and what we will not see until we will have closed our temporal eyes forever. So, above all, our consideration is also directed on this day to that world. So allow me, then, to show you:

***The Glorious View Which the Resurrection of JESUS Christ  
Reveals to Us of the Other  
Side of the Grave***

1. That is, it shows faith its eventual perfect freedom from all evil, and promises it
2. the enjoyment of a blessed life beyond description.

**I.**

Everything, my friends, that Christ needed to earn for us to be our Savior, he earned through his life, suffering and death. That's also why he cried out, dying on the cross, "It is finished!" For at that moment he had fulfilled the law for all sinners, since he had born all their punishment. Then he had already won justification before God and life and salvation for all. What God had demanded for the redemption and liberation of the fallen race of man, Christ had now rendered. The required payment for all human debt was now delivered.

So in Christ's life, suffering and death a believer finds everything that is able to comfort him in this life against sins and God's disfavor. But a person would be in such a terrible state if he believed in Christ, but if he didn't know that all he hopes for in Christ came to fruition completely back there at that tomb! Who must endure more suffering than just those who believe Christ has already born their punishment? Who is more weighed down by rejection, scorn, and ridicule than just those who boast that they have come to the glory of being children of God through Christ? Who is more worried in this world about their sins than just those to whom Christ here calls: "Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you?" So how very true is that saying of the holy apostle: "If our hope in Christ is only for this life, then we are the most pitiable of all people."

Yes, if Christ were not also resurrected, it would be terrible to be a Christian. But his resurrection is what opens an indescribably glorious view of that other side of the grave to us. For as imminently as Christ's death applies to us, so imminently his resurrection applies to us also. Christ stands here as the representative of all sinners in his resurrection, as in his death; as much in his exaltation as in his humiliation. As God acted towards Christ, he was equally acting towards all mankind, for whom Christ had been made security. That is, as Christ had not been given into death for the sake of his sins but for the sake of our sins, so Christ was also not raised for the sake of his justification but for our justification. As all people had really been punished and condemned when Christ was punished and condemned in his suffering, so also all people are truly declared free as Christ was again declared free and released from the prison of death by his resurrection. That's why St. Paul says: "We maintain that as One has died for all, so all have died, so that we will also live with him." (2 Corinthians 5.14; Romans 6.8). So as we see what we deserved by our sins in the image of the suffering Crucified, so we see what we have now received through him in the victor's crown of the resurrection.

So if we believe on him, we have in him a mirror that will not deceive where we view just the perfect freedom from all evil that we have to look forward to after our death, as Christ was our security.

Though their sins are forgiven them, Christians here must still always get tripped up by their sins, as their heaviest, most painful burden, and so they are still always careful and fearing that they will fall into sins anew that might cause them to lose their jewel. But as Christ no longer bore our sins when he returned from death's realm, so also even his believers will be freed of their sins forever after their death. Then they will no longer buckle under any sinful weakness, yes, no memory of their past sinful condition will burden them any further for every trace of sin will there be erased. There all will become perfectly holy and innocent, dressed in white robes, shining gloriously, where no temptation can ever bring them into danger, lest their crown fall from their heads. Oh what a blessed, beautiful state of being that will be! – Further, here the confession of faith in Christ is still undertaken with all kinds of ridicule and rejection. Here being a Christian is an occasion for bitterest mockery and persecution by the unbelieving world. But after his resurrection Christ is exalted so infinitely above everything that wanted set itself in opposition to him, and he did not even deem them worthy of his appearing to them in his glory. So also the Christian, after death, bids eternal farewell to all disgrace and rejection. They are lifted high above the world, above all their enemies. No mockery will ever again sicken their hearts there, no slander will taint their reputation, no persecution shall touch them, no fiery dart of the evil one can strike them. As the world here rejects the Christian, there the world will be, and eternally remain, exiled from the Christian, but the Christians will live in eternal triumph at a blessed distance, apart from all those who hate them, all the enemies of God and his Word. – Finally, more than anyone else, believing Christians here may have to painfully experience that they are wandering in a valley of mourning. All of heaven is promised them, but here they often have practically nothing to quiet their hunger or cover their nakedness. They may have to struggle often to put a roof over their heads. Their reward is poverty, their life a tangle of suffering and misfortune, a laborious and anxious pilgrimage amidst tears and groaning. Their body is the home of pains, of illnesses and afflictions, and, after all the battles they must struggle through, yet before them is always the most severe, certain and unavoidable struggle, the struggle of death. But as Christ no longer bore his crown of thorns after his resurrection, as he now was free of all suffering and the imperfections of this world, so the door of all suffering is also closed forever behind the dying Christian. After his death, he has outlasted and out battled his enemies. There God no longer applies his chastening to guard their souls as he does here. There they will no longer be tested. They will never again need a refiner's fire. They are then perfected. There will never again be poverty. There will never again be hunger or thirst, nor painful afflictions. Troubling doubts and distresses of the heart will end there. There tears will never again be wept and sobbing will end. Therefore it says in the divine Revelation: "God will wipe away all the tears from

their eyes. And death will be no more, nor suffering, nor weeping, nor pain. For the first creation is past.”

Oh what a glorious view the resurrection of JESUS Christ opens to us even from this side of our graves! As free as Christ was of what he once had to endure, back on this day, we will also be that free as we believe on him. All that here disturbs our heart shall be removed there, all the bands that restrain us in which here we must groan shall there be loosed, every well of our tears run dry, every complaint stilled! – And this shall not be slowly brought about there, but in a single moment, when this world disappears before our failing eyes, immediately our troubles will vanish. At your last sigh in this world follows an eternal hallelujah in heaven; at your last anxious drop of sweat, eternal refreshment; upon the last day of earthly labor, an eternal Sabbath. “It is finished” can also now be exclaimed by a dying Christian, glory also now follows his cross; for “blessed are those who die in the LORD from now on, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labor, and their works do follow them.”

So you followers of Christ, don’t complain that godless people are so well off and, on the other hand, you have it so tough. After the joys of this world follows sorrow, and after their brief laughter, never ending tears. At their death the light of their joy is extinguished, oh, an eternal night then envelopes their soul and is their dwelling – a dreadful abyss. But your soul rises in death high above, freed with Christ from the prison of all misery. The earth and hell remain in the depths below you with their hue and cry, and heaven above is open to you with its eternal glory.

## II.

Now this brings us, secondly, to further consider the indescribably blessed life whose enjoyment the resurrection of JESUS Christ promises the Christian.

By nature that other side is off limits to us human beings. By nature man stands before eternity as before a high, fortified castle, whose looming walls tower up to heaven, concealing it from our eyes, and whose diamond gate is shut tight by an ominous lock no man can open. But Christ today has burst open this gate and lock. His open tomb is like a wide opened door to eternal life and, therefore, a believing Christian looks with rapture through this portal into the infinite rooms of heaven.

Christ is not a man who is worldly wise, who can speak all sorts of charming words about another world which he is barred from knowing. No, he can say: “We speak what we know and witness what we have seen.” Yes, Christ has not only gone before us into the heavenly Canaan as a faithful scout, and has not just brought us a few sweet bunches of grapes of hope from that other dear land as a preview, no, as God once led his servant Moses up to Mount Nebo to show him Canaan from a distance, Christ leads his Christians to his empty grave and lets them here take a look into the Paradise promised all believers, which they anticipate when they have traveled the wilderness road of life at Christ’s side.

And what is it that Christ lets his people see? In a word: Perfection, that is, perfect knowledge, perfect love, and, finally, perfect joy and salvation, according to body and soul.

As soon as a Christian has closed his eyes, he has stepped out of faith into sight. Here he saw as through a mirror in a dark Word only, but there face to face. Here he acknowledges bit by bit, but there he knows as he is known. Here the Christian stands before the mysteries of divine rule in the kingdoms of nature and grace as before a dark abyss, so he will often be afflicted with doubts about God's Word and his wondrous ways, but there he knows God's mysterious counsels and leading so clearly that he can only stand in awe of the divine revelation of divine wisdom, favor and justice. There he will eternally cry out, filled with praise and honor for God: "God, how blessed, how fatherly was your wondrous plan, even though I often moaned about it when my faith was weak! You always intended only my benefit, how gloriously you have brought about all good things!" – For the most part, the children of this world in their generation are wiser than the children of light here, but there the wisest and most learned unbeliever will be blinded even by his soul's natural powers and no ray of light will brighten the night of his solitude. On the other hand, the simplest Christian will be illuminated by his knowledge there like the angels at the throne of eternal wisdom. Heaven will be pure light, pure glory, pure sun, whose rays are focused like a magnifying glass by the souls of the saints. Compared to this light that bathes the saints the brightness of the noon day sun upon our earth – is night time, and compared to their knowledge, the knowledge of the wisest person on this world – the thoughts of fools. Before the eyes of the saints both great books, the Book of Revelation and the Book of Creation, lie unsealed, and they read in them and every Word in them is clear and with every Word there is always new light pressing into their transfigured spirit. Of course there will be a difference in the glory of the saints. As St. Paul bears witness: "The sun has one glory, the moon has another, and the stars have another. So also in the resurrection of the dead." But the greater glory of others will not diminish the blessedness of those who have less, but it will rather increase their blessedness, as, for example, the other features of the human face look just that much more beautiful, the brighter those eyes sparkle in their midst.

But, further, perfect love is also included in that indescribably blessed life which the resurrection of Christ promises to believers on the other side of the grave. Indeed, even here, love of God and for all their fellow redeemed is poured into the hearts of true Christians by the Holy Ghost; therefore, even here they pursue sanctification, without which no one will see the LORD. But Christians here still feel bound by so many thousands of bands! How many obstacles they still feel in their hearts opposing what is good! How often they are, therefore, forced to groan with Paul: "Miserable man that I am, who will save me from this body of death!" How gladly might Christians even here want to soar up to God! – but their wings are still bound through the indolence of their flesh. But it won't be that way there. There he will be completely grown up into the image of God. There his heart will be a purely burning fire of love. The mark of laziness and sinful lust will be

removed from him, and his sole desire and contentment will be in constantly praising and glorifying God and serving him. To carry out God's commands will not be difficult or burdensome, but easy, pleasant and blissful. For there our worship of God will be nothing but eternal, joyful play, and, inside us and externally, all weariness and obstruction will be removed.

But now, finally, who can describe the joy, the glory, the bliss, that those who die in faith in the resurrected One will constantly feed upon! There they possess perfect happiness, that they can never lose again. Oh what sort of existence will that be then, when a person has fought victoriously through the last battle in this land of testing, and now he is far above this world's perilous ocean, and arrived at that shore of blessed eternity? Then he will awaken as out of a dream and cry out: "Is it possible? Are you redeemed? Are you saved? And nothing, nothing can now destroy your perfect happiness? O merciful God, how shall I praise you?" – There, as God's Word says, the blessed receives a crown upon his head and a palm branch in his right hand. Oh, what honor, what glory will that be, that God is promising us under these figures? – There we shall receive a transfigured, spiritual body, like the transfigured body of JESUS Christ, which needs no sleep and can no longer feel any pain or hunger or thirst, that never tires, is never sick, never ages but retains its youthful beauty and vigor eternally; a body that can traverse all creation quicker than lightning; a body where all is seen, all is heard, all is felt, all is tasted; a body that no earthly body can grasp, that also can press through stone and seal, and through closed doors; a body that is made fit to drink of the never ceasing rivers of blessedness. Oh what a transformation that will be, you sick, you weary, you miserable people! – There we shall, as God's Word says, be fed at God's table with his heavenly manna, keeping with Christ the wedding banquet, triumphing with him, hearing the singing of the heavenly choir. On top of that, my friends, how great this eternal LORD's Supper will be in heaven, how great that eternal celebration, how great that heavenly triumph procession will be, when these are revealed to us in the holy Scripture as just dark shadows of those future blessings! What harmonies there will be, when those millions of harpists pluck their harps and the thousands of choirs will unite in singing hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb that was slain! – Finally, each person shall inherit a kingdom that has been prepared for him from the beginning of the world, and he shall eternally dwell with God and look upon him. Oh, what will that be like, to possess a kingdom in heaven! What sort of dwelling must God's own house be! What kind of scene it will be, when we see God face to face!

There the joy will be beyond measure, the refreshments will be more than can be counted, the glory more infinite than you could ever exhaust, the wealth more precious than you could ever appraise. And there will be no standing still. One joy after another, and delight after delight and the whole heaven will be an endless sea full of blessedness, where we will taste the goodness of God and see and worship and praise him; that will be uninterrupted joy, enjoyment without disgust, satisfaction without satiety, always more glorious always more joyful and always more blessed from eternity to eternity.

Now, my friends, what will come of us if we ignore such blessedness? For as blessed as we all should be because God alone has made us, and even if we are, at the same time, sinners, yet the resurrected One has brought forth this indescribable salvation to us all from his grave, and even, O hearer, if you have been the greatest of all sinners that ever lived on earth, yet you also would not be lost, but you also, even you, should receive eternal life.

So now who among us considers himself unworthy of eternal life? Who among us has taken but one peek into heaven that has been opened, who now will say: "I don't want it. I want to go to my grave and someday see others saved, but, as for me, I want to be condemned?" Oh certainly no one would say that. We all want to be saved.

Now then, if you want that, do not go upon the wide path of the world, nor travel the road of the masses, for they do not walk to God, but away from God down to hell. O let the blessed sight Christ's resurrection has opened to us of what lies on the other side of the grave be inviting to you to cling to it with this Christ, believe on him and follow after him.

Here 'midst taunt and scorn,  
 There the glorious crown,  
 Here faith hopes upon God's might  
 There in hand and in eye's sight.  
 Thus the glorious crown  
 Follows taunt and frown.

Amen. Amen.

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## Early Service Easter Day [FK 250]

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LORD JESUS Christ, we joyfully and gladly appear here on this day, for today we shall hear that you not only offered yourself for the sake of our sin, but also have been resurrected for our justification; that you have not only battled for us against sin, death and hell, even unto death, but also have overcome these our enemies, made them a public spectacle and by your own work formed triumph parade before them. For we are now declared free of all our sins and declared righteous by your heavenly Father, and have become your brothers and coheirs of your glory.

O LORD JESUS! What shall we do now that this precious preaching, this reviving proclamation, this most blessed good news of the highest and last comfort of all sinners not be preached to us in vain? We turn to you, O Prince of life and Conqueror of death, and we pray: As back then you would not let death nor grave, neither stone nor seal, no locked door and no sin and unfaithfulness of your people hinder you from standing in their midst and letting them experience and receive the joy of your resurrection, so also do not allow the closed doors of our hearts, or even the heavy stone of our sorrows, or even our sins and unfaithfulness hinder you