

The Vigil of the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord
St. Matthew 28:1-7
April 3rd, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Now After the Sabbath

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, who didst deliver Thy Son for our offenses, and didst raise Him again for our justification: We beseech Thee, grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that He may rule and govern us according to Thy will; graciously keep us in the true faith; defend us from all sins, and after this life raise us unto eternal life, through the same, Thy beloved Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hallelujah! That word has been silent among us for a long time; about the last seventy days. It is good to hear and great to say. Hallelujah! It was silent among us during Gesimatide and Lent, but now we no longer have to refrain from saying it. Hallelujah! Indeed, we get to greet each other with these words throughout the entire season of Easter. The Christian greeting that you are familiar with every Easter: "Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!" with the response, "He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!" We will get to hear these words that were silent proclaimed abundantly during the Easter season. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! We will get to greet each other with these words abundantly during the Easter season. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

This is why this night has been longed for with eager expectation among us. This is the first celebration of the Easter season. The night when the veil of gloom that encompassed us over our sins and the sacrifice it cost our dear Lord + Jesus to redeem us during the Lenten season has finally been lifted. Our Lord + Jesus has gone into the grave, having fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and paying the penalty of our sins, but now He is no longer in the grave. The Sabbath—the day of rest of our Lord in the grave—is over. And our Lord + Jesus has risen from the dead. Hallelujah! Do not look for Him in the grave, for He is no longer there. He has arisen from the sleep of death. He has awoken from His Sabbath rest in the grave and now lives and reigns for all eternity, interceding for us poor sinners at the right hand of God the Father. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

St. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb with gloom in their hearts over the Lord's death and burial. But when they arrived, they saw that there was a great earthquake, that an angel of the Lord had descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the entrance to the tomb, and the Lord + Jesus was not there. He had arisen! Hallelujah! There is now no longer need to fear death, for our Lord + Jesus has conquered death once and for all. He grants life and salvation to all those who cling to Him in faith; who cling to His perfect sacrifice for their atonement, and to His resurrection as a sure sign that the Lord God heavenly Father has accepted the sacrifice of His dearly Beloved and Only-Begotten Son, our Lord + Jesus. Hallelujah!

Our sins have been atoned for, and we have been given the gift of eternal life. Hallelujah! This

can be the only response to such good news. Hallelujah! To hear this good news, we have waited with eager anticipation all through the days of the penitential season of Lent. The Sabbath is over. The First Day of the Week has come. We gladly come to this sanctuary to hear the good news of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us.

Indeed, this Vigil that we celebrate dates back to the earliest days of the Christian Church, just because of the joy that comes from the celebration of the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. The Christians of the Early Church were so excited to be at church on Easter that they would begin showing up on the night before the celebration. Christians have continued to gather the night before the celebration of the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord for centuries. That this practice has fallen into disuse among some Christians is a testament that this world increases in corruption and sin as the years progress. This Service that we are participating in began because of this urge by the Early Church Christians to show up early to worship. Since there were people already gathering the clergy decided it was good to read Scriptures to the ones waiting. Just as we heard those twelve readings from the Old Testament. The Service expanded by the early Fourth century to include the rite of Holy Baptism for the new converts, just as we remembered our Holy Baptism by hearing that rite again and calling to mind the words that we promised, or our sponsors promised on our behalf, at our Holy Baptism.

We are here tonight because we eagerly have waited to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. We have waited long—many days—to say aloud once more: Hallelujah! We are here tonight to greet one another once again with the Easter proclamation: "Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!" and the response: "He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!" For when we go to the tomb of our Lord, we find it empty. He is no longer dead. His awaking from the dead is good news for us, for it means that we too will rise again from the dead on the Last Day and rejoice in Heaven eternally singing, "Hallelujah!" forever and ever. Whenever we sing "Hallelujah!" we are proclaiming that we will never see death; that we will live forever in Heaven. Hallelujah! When we greet one another with the Easter proclamation: "Hallelujah! Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!" we are proclaiming to one another that we will not taste death. We are proclaiming that death no longer has power over us. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Therefore, my dear friends, let us sing our "Hallelujahs!" and proclaim to one another on this joyous night that we will never see death, for the Sabbath rest of our Lord + Jesus is over. He has arisen from the grave, even as we will rise again on the Last Day from our graves. Death has no more dominion over us. Sin, death, and the power of the devil have been defeated by our Lord + Jesus. They can harm us no more. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah forever and ever. Amen. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, Who through the resurrection of Thine Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, replenish us, we beseech Thee, with Thy heavenly grace, that, dying unto sin always, and living unto righteousness, we may at last triumph over death and the grave, in the full image, of our risen Lord, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!