

**Devotions – April 19-26, 2015**  
**Rev. Devon Barrix, Interim Pastor**  
**Immanuel Lutheran Church, Rhinelander, WI**

**Sunday, April 19, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Resurrection of Our Lord

Text: Mark 16:8

**So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**

So here it is Easter morning...the day of the Resurrection of Our Lord. And the words we hear from the gospel after the women discover that the tomb is empty are: terror...amazement...fear. And they told no one!

Terror and amazement seems to fill our lives today. Our news is filled with the terror and violence in our schools...what should be a place of learning and fun for our children has become a place fear. We wonder what the news will bring today...will it be another school shooting or a child who takes their life as a victim of cyber-bulling. And our children are afraid! A fear that I never experienced in my little one-room school.

Terror and amazement seems to fill our lives today. People struggling to provide the basic necessities for their families. Our elderly facing the potential of a debilitating disease. Families fearing the safety of their children with all the drive-by shootings in poverty stricken neighborhoods. The threat of terrorism in our country...a place where we used to feel safe and secure. And we are afraid!

But in the midst of our fears we hear the good news: Christ is risen! We have the gift of new life through the resurrection. Fear will not be the final victor! So unlike the women at the tomb who told no one...we need to go and tell everyone!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the good news of our gospel today. Empower us through the Holy Spirit to overcome our fears and send us out to the world to proclaim the good news: Christ is risen. Amen*



**Monday, April 20, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Second Sunday of Easter

Text: John 20:20b-21

**Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

Often when I think about peace I wonder why there is such an absence of peace in our world today. It seems at times that wherever I look I see little or no peace...instead what I see is violence! Violence in our schools...in our communities...in our country...in the world we live in. Violence...not peace!

I find myself wanting to go back to the days of my childhood. It was a time when we didn't lock our homes...left the keys in our car or pick-up truck...felt safe at school and at play. The fear that sticks out in my childhood was getting home from school after a 1 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile walk and that my mother already knew that I had gotten in trouble at school today. That news always beat me home and usually meant that I was about to be in more trouble!

It's then that I remember that Jesus is speaking of a different peace. It's a peace that comes to me in the midst of the violence in our world. It's a peace that comes through my relationship with Christ and gives me peace in the spite of the violence that surrounds my life. And as disciples of Christ we...you and me...are sent by Christ to share this peace with others. So we go in peace to share the good news!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and equip us to share the good news that Christ is risen and He is the source of our peace. Amen*



**Tuesday, April 21, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Third Sunday of Easter

Text: Luke 24:40-43

**[And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.] While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.**

My heart is filled with joy for my Lord has risen from the tomb. Yet my mind is struggling with doubt...with disbelief. How can this be possible? My heart says believe but my mind...supposedly my source of logic...questions the reality of this.

Even the disciples earlier in this text thought they were seeing a ghost. I remember as child convincing myself there was no such thing as a ghost. But given the right set of circumstances...perhaps a dark and stormy night trying to get to sleep...imagining creepy

sounds. Good grief...maybe ghosts do exist. Somehow I would make it through the night and awake again convinced that there is no such thing as a ghost.

Jesus shows the disciples his hands and his feet. Although filled with joy it appears they still struggled with belief. Then Jesus asks if they have anything to eat and they give him a piece of fish which he eats. Makes me wonder...was Jesus really hungry or did he want to impress upon them that he was not a ghost because ghosts don't eat? Or maybe both! What I do know is that if it was Friday and in Wisconsin fish would be most appropriate!

The good news is that Christ is risen. In this gospel he sends his disciples to be witnesses just as he sends us today!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, our hearts are filled with joy that Christ is risen. Help us in our moments of disbelief and send us forth as your Son's faithful disciples to share the good news of his resurrection. Amen.*



**Wednesday, April 22, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Fourth Sunday of Easter

Text: John 10:14

**I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me.**

Although I grew up on a farm we never had sheep. We had dairy cattle, chickens, pigs and horses...but no sheep. However, a good friend of mine...Pastor Bruce... raised sheep as a hobby. I remember him telling me a story of trying to load some of his sheep onto a trailer. He stood behind them and tried to get them to step onto the trailer bed...all to no avail. They just milled around and refused to climb onto the trailer!

Then he remembered that sheep are followers and that they follow their shepherd. So Pastor Bruce climbed onto the trailer and called his sheep. Sure enough...when they heard his voice and saw him on the trailer they proceeded to climb aboard. He was their shepherd...he knew them and they knew him!

Jesus is the good shepherd...the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. This is what a shepherd does to protect his sheep. We are the sheep and Jesus is our shepherd. He knows us and we know him. And when the wolf...danger...sin...comes and threatens our lives Jesus is our keeper. Jesus is the one who saves us from sin...death...and the power of evil. Jesus is our good shepherd!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for sending your Son to be our shepherd...our Savior and Lord. Help us to tell others that he came to be their shepherd as well. Amen.*



**Thursday, April 23, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Fifth Sunday of Easter

Text: John 15:1-2, 5

**I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. I am the vine, you are the branches.**

We had apples trees on the farm where I grew up. Unfortunately for the trees...and for our family...we didn't prune the apple trees. Their branches were allowed to grow in a totally disorganized manner. They did bear some fruit...but as I have since learned...they were capable of bearing considerable more fruit given proper pruning.

Many years later I started apple trees at our home in Columbus, WI and more recently at our home in Lake Tomahawk, WI. Now I know that importance of pruning the branches of my trees if I want to enjoy their good fruit. And I have witnessed the benefit of proper pruning!

Jesus is the vine...we are the branches...and his Father is the vinegrower. Our role as branches is to bear fruit. As branches we are nourished through Word and Sacrament which enables us to bear fruit. As the vinegrower God does the pruning of the branches...keeping the good branches that are capable of bearing fruit. As disciples of Jesus we are called to bear fruit. We do this through our witness of the gospel...through our sharing that Christ is risen...risen for all to free us from the power of sin. If we do this faithfully...we are capable of bearing much fruit!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, as branches we cling to Jesus...our vine and place our trust in you to prune us so that we may bear much fruit. It is in your Son's name that we pray. Amen.*



**Friday, April 24, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Sixth Sunday of Easter

Text: John 15:15b-16

**I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.**

Growing up I never participated in organized sports. My involvement in sports was limited to playing on a team through the process of choosing sides. This was the process in my little one room school and in high school phy-ed.

For softball I was usually one of the first to be chosen as I swung a pretty good bat and actually hit a lot of home runs...believe it or not! When it came to basketball I was usually one of the last to be chosen. Actually I was a fairly good shot in basketball...but I couldn't dribble the ball if my life depended on it...and that is an unfortunate fact!

“You did not choose me but I chose you.” What wonderful good news that Jesus chose me...and he chose you as well. Not that I deserved being chosen...but I was chosen out of God's grace for a sinner like me...a sinner like all of us. Chosen by God's love and grace and mercy revealed to us on the cross where Jesus died for our sins and with his victory over death through his glorious resurrection. What greater act of love exists?

And Jesus calls us friends and promises that the Father will give us whatever we ask for in his name. It brings to mind that wonderful hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” What a friend indeed!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we give thanks for your love for us revealed through your Son. We thank you for choosing us and calling us friends. Empower us to share the good news of Easter to others. Amen.*



**Saturday, April 25, 2015**

My Easter Journey...the Seventh Sunday of Easter

Text: John 17:16-19

**I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.**

There are days when I look at the world and find myself feeling frustrated and depressed. Where I hope and pray for peace I see oppression in the forms of poverty...hunger...homelessness...violence...war. Oh how my heart yearns for peace!

Then Jesus reminds me through the gospel that I do not belong to this world...I belong to Christ who came into the world to reveal God's love for me...for us. This is Jesus' prayer for his disciples...for you and me today. That although I/we no longer belong to this world we are here for a purpose...a mission...to proclaim the good news of Easter. To tell the world that Christ died for their sins and that he rose from the tomb so that we may have the gift of eternal life in his presence.

Jesus tells God that he has given them/us God's word. He also tells God and us that the world has hated God's word. And then he asks God to protect us from the evil one. So here we are today, disciples in Christ sent to proclaim the truth...the word of God...to a world not particularly interested in hearing the word and believing in it. Some challenge! But we go...believing that God will indeed protect and care for us.

So having looked at all the gospels for the Seven Sundays of Easter this year we indeed have received good news to share with others through our words and deeds. Alleluia, Christ has risen...He has risen indeed, Alleluia! Alleluia!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we thank you for the good news revealed to us during this Easter Season. Send us out to this world to boldly proclaim the good news of Easter and protect us in our travels. Amen.*

