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“SomeOne has happened.” Acts 10:34-43

“So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.””

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Easter Sunday. Wonderful holiday. So many options to do. Why are we here? Do we like this place or this group of people that much? Do we want to learn some principles for a better life, or maybe to feel morally superior to others? Why are we here?

Let me suggest that we are here because something has happened. Something happened almost two millennia ago that changed everything. Something that hadn't happened before and will never happen again in this age.

Or should we say - *someone happened*. Jesus from Nazareth. He was crucified and died on Friday, rose from the dead on Sunday and appeared to many. We are here because it happened. That is the reason. Because that event completely changed what we know about this world, about ourselves and about the world to come.

This event is what brings us together on this wonderful morning. And we just heard it read from the Holy Scriptures, how Peter the apostle spoke about this event to the people who had invited him to learn more about what had happened.

“You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.”

Notice that Peter was referring to something that almost everyone had heard. He spoke about these events as a common knowledge. “You know what happened.” His listeners knew, they had heard about it already.

It is true about people today as well. How many would be out there who haven't heard about what happened throughout all Judea and in Jerusalem. At least a little bit. Not too many. So what events was Peter referring to?

“Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [...] They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised

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him on the third day..." What?! This could be the first reaction. How ridiculous is that? That's how 1st century's smartest people in Athens reacted when Paul told them what had happened. "What do you mean, raised Him from the dead? You know that it is impossible!" This is where every reasonable person stops listening and goes away.

Just consider what Peter was saying! Jesus was dead on Friday. Not just dead, but killed dead, crucified dead, pierced through the heart. "Now you are telling me that He was raised and was alive again? Can you expect anyone to believe this message?!" Yes...

And Peter gives us the reason why every sensible person should at least seriously consider this incredible message. It is this. **"We are [eye] witnesses of all that Jesus did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem... For Jesus appeared after His resurrection – not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead."** Eyewitnesses!

Peter, and other disciples and all together more than 500 hundred people were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. More than 500! They saw the risen Jesus as we see one another. It was as unbelievable to them as it is to us.

The truth is, that Peter knew as well as we do, that resurrection from the dead is entirely impossible. Nothing like that had happened before nor could happen. We can learn from the Scriptures what Peter and his contemporaries believed.

From ancient times God had sent His messengers to foretell what will happen, what He will do to restore the goodness of His fallen creation, what He will do to triumph over sin and death. He foretold about His anointed messenger, about the Messiah. These messages were recorded, kept, read, preached, memorized, taught, discussed, hoped for, shared... This is what we today know as the books of the Old Testament.

Peter was brought up hearing and learning these messages received through God's holy men. Moreover, he was one the disciples of Jesus. One of the closest disciples. He even believed, genuinely believed and confessed that Jesus was God's Messiah. Peter had also seen all the miracles that Jesus performed before the eyes of many, he had seen Jesus raising others from the dead.

And then, Peter had repeatedly heard from Jesus Himself about what was going to happen. Jesus kept teaching His disciples that He is going to Jerusalem, where He will suffer, will be killed and then... and then... He will be raised from the dead on the third day.

If you recall, Peter even got into an argument with Jesus, rebuking Him for such strange predictions. If anyone had heard it loud and clear that Jesus was going to be killed and will be raised from the dead again, it was Peter. And even after all of that he didn't believe it was possible that Jesus would come back from the dead.

How do we know that? When his beloved Teacher was crucified and died, Peter was in despair, as were all the other disciples. Do you know why? Because they knew what every mature human being in this world knows – you don't rise again, no one comes back from the dead. When you are dead, you are dead.

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As much as they trusted their Teacher and loved Him, they knew that there is no such a thing as the resurrection from the dead. He was gone, as were all their hopes for establishing God's Kingdom. They didn't wait joyfully with anticipation: "Now we will see Jesus rising again!" But... then it happened. That Sunday. It changed everything.

As lightning from clear skies, the Risen Jesus appeared to them. Shocking everyone. He stood among them. Just like that. He conversed with them. He ate and drank with them. He invited them: "**Come here, touch me, see, it's me!**"

They saw Him, spoke with Him, they touched Him. The Risen Jesus. And suddenly everything made sense. His message, His death, His resurrection. They realised that hidden under that humble human form of the man Jesus from Nazareth, it was the eternal Son of God who stood among them.

The Lord of entire creation, the Life Eternal Himself. Suddenly everything was different. Death didn't have the last word anymore. Jesus had. The disciples experienced that real and possible is not what we have been told is real and possible, but what Jesus tells us. He is the One who creates reality.

His words are His works. What He says, happens. He spoke the Universe into existence, He has spoken all of us into existence, and He has spoken the future of His disciples into existence. And what an amazing future it is!

This is why we are here. Because this event, the resurrection of Jesus, not only changed everything, but it also has everything to do with us. The Son of God didn't become one of us to die and to rise again just to show that He is in control.

He did it for a reason. You are the reason. He did it so that He could rescue you from under the power of sin and death and the devil. So that united with Him you could be where He is. This is why He sent His apostles, His eyewitnesses, to bring the Good News about this incredible event to all nations.

This is why He commanded to baptize and to teach, and to speak His own words to all people. For when we speak Jesus' words, they are not ours, they are His words and they always come together with His Spirit.

And His Spirit is the One, who unites us with Jesus. As we listen to Jesus, as we receive His Spirit, we become one with Him, we become one body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church. That is who you are. He is the Head; you all are His members.

And where the Head goes, the body will follow. Jesus has risen, He has risen in a new resurrected body, to live and reign forever. He is the firstborn of the dead, and we are to follow Him where He is, for the head can't leave without the body.

This is why we are here. Because of the resurrection. For it changes everything, past, present and future for everyone who is united with Jesus by means of His Spirit. All the sins of our past are forgiven. Our present is filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

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Our future is focused on this wonderful hope – the day when we'll follow our Lord, when we will be free from these bodies ridden by sin and death and will be raised in new perfect and glorious bodies to live with our God, Jesus the Christ. This is why we are here.

This is, why we confess every time when we come together in our Father's house: **"We believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead."**

We believe in the Spirit, who comes to us in Word and Sacraments, creates true faith and unites us with our Lord Jesus Christ, and when the time comes, will raise us as He did with Jesus. We believe these historical events. And especially in this one, the most unbelievable of them all – the resurrection of Jesus from Nazareth. For we heard about it from trustworthy eyewitnesses. That is why we are here.

Not because we want to learn some principle for a better life, not because we may want to feel morally superior to others. But because the Triune God in Jesus has made the impossible possible. Jesus has defeated death.

What now for us? God in Jesus has done everything to overcome our ultimate enemies. The victory is won. It is yours. Nothing remains to be done in this respect. It is finished! Glorious eternal life in resurrected bodies awaits you.

Now Jesus commands His Church: **"Preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."** This is the message of Easter Sunday. The Good News for everyone.

God came to us. He lived among us as Jesus from Nazareth. He wrestled death and came out victorious. He sent His disciples to announce to the entire world about these events. How can we do our part? It is simple. When we rejoice with heavenly joy.

Listen to these Good News, meditate upon them, let it truly sink in... that Jesus Christ has done all of that for you! He did it. And that now you just need to wait for the day when you will see the Risen Jesus face-to-face.

And as you reflect on this, the Holy Spirit will fill you with heavenly joy. He will give you joy that overflows and spills over impacting all the people whom you meet. This joy is contagious. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, rejoice, delight, be glad, and don't hide this joy. And when people ask what this is about, why are you so joyful, tell them that someone has happened. Jesus from Nazareth. He has risen! He has risen, indeed!

And the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keeps your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.

Amen.