THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST — Rev. Carl F. Thrun

Rolling Meadows - 1970

IN NOMINE JESU

Isaiah 25: 8,9 GOD WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER, AND THE LORD GOD WILL WIPE AWAY TEARS FROM ALL FACES, AND THE REPROACH OF HIS PEOPLE HE WILL TAKE AWAY FROM ALL THE EARTH; FOR THE LORD HAS SPOKEN. IT WILL BE SAID ON THAT DAY, "LO, THIS IS OUR GOD; WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM, THAT HE MIGHT SAVE US. THIS IS THE LORD; WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM; LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION."

"WE HAVE WAITED!" "WE HAVE WAITED!" The text says it well. The long Lententide has brought us longing and yearning for the brightness of Spring and the sound of the songs of Resurrection.

There is really no better way to think or speak about the Resurrection than to proclaim it in the language of the Great Hymns of Easter: "THE STRIFE IS O'ER, ALLELUIA! THE BATTLE WON!" That song arose so early in the Christian Church that no one knows who really wrote the words.

CHRIST IS RISEN! The Battle of Life over Death has been won! I wonder how many of us here in this Church today really believe that. Or do we pass it off as mere wishful thinking - as a nice fanciful fairy tale (a fine story but) - an idle dream? I am sure we would all like to believe it. But somehow it seems just too good to be true! Our reason rebels. (all the facts of life speak otherwise! It calls for FAITH!) On the face of it, it seems preposterous and quite absurd that this humble, lowly Rabbi from Nazareth (this Carpenter's Son) should come back to life and stroll out of the tomb. "crucified, dead, and buried"

Look at yourself! Look at your neighbors and the people around you! (our life betrays us!) Everyone is intensely preoccupied with trying to get as much out of this life as he possibly can - trying to drink to the dregs whatever (little) happiness he can find - sure that when he is put in a coffin that that will be the end! This is the way we live - and this is the way we die! Even if it is not said in so many words, this is the way the Resurrection Joy is downgraded. We all know people in these troublous times who have no more tears to shed and who have become so grim about life's burdens that they know everything else except thanks and praise to God.

Man knows about death! There is no need to put a special fear of death into his heart before he can truly appreciate Easter. A thousand times each day - by war and accident and grim disease - man hears about the end of life. DEATH comes to be the unavoidable - even though ununderstandable - end of all things.

Modern medicine can push it back a little, but not much. Men rate the saving of one life by new drugs or transplants as being rather minimal and cheap alongside of the threat of mass atomic war and destruction. Man has stopped running because his fate is sealed and death rules his life!

Are you ready now to listen once more to the voice of the Prophet? "GOD WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER, AND THE LORD GOD WILL WIPE AWAY TEARS FROM ALL FACES, AND THE REPROACH OF HIS PEOPLE HE WILL TAKE AWAY FROM ALL THE EARTH; FOR THE LORD HAS SPOKEN." The reproach of His people is the unbelief of the world! But it is done away with! God has spoken - "Death is swallowed up forever" - "the tears are wiped away from all faces" --- CHRIST IS RISEN!

Again we can say, as on that first day: "LO, THIS IS OUR GOD, WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM THAT HE MIGHT SAVE US, WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM; LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION."

Christian JOY now becomes Christian DUTY! CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD! We gather for our Resurrection Joys today about a flowered Cross that is bright with hope and the colors of the King. We gather about His altar to receive the BODY GIVEN FOR US and the BLOOD SHED FOR US.

There is joy and peace only for those who "HAVE WAITED FOR HIM." We are the CHURCH OF GLORY today - not only the CHURCH OF THE CROSS. We remember the words of St. Paul: "I AM DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED." But in Philippians 3 he goes on to say: "WHATEVER GAIN I HAD, I COUNTED AS LOSS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST....THAT I MAY KNOW HIM AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, AND MAY SHARE HIS SUFFERINGS, BECOMING LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH, THAT IF POSSIBLE I MAY ATTAIN THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD." No wonder that the MESSAGE runs through the whole New Testament: "CHRIST IS RISEN!" Therefore the message we have to bring is relevant for all men everywhere!

"WE HAVE WAITED FOR THIS!" Our faith would really be empty without this - nothing but husks! No matter how beautifully and piously you said whatever there is to say, it would still be empty. Any preaching which does not include the

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST and THAT HOPE for all men is powerless - and "WE ARE YET IN OUR SINS." If that is true, then all of life is empty and the waiting is in vain and the hope of glory is a hollow mockery!

"GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM ALL FACES." Even in the long, dark day before the coming of Christ, the prophet becomes the herald of the NEW FAITH. H will not allow men to think that they have been lost out of memory of God or forgotten in the hour of death. If God cannot help to TAKE THE TEARS AWAY and t BRING AN END TO THE WAITING — then all the great and beautiful words about the Messiah who was to come would have ended up in meaningness and emptiness!

The waiting is not in vain! "WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM! LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION!" This is the way it was with the first disciples. Fr fearful, cowardly, doubting men they were changed into bold, undaunted WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION! This was no longer just an event - but this was salvation complete! This was their challenge — to be something they had never been befor So Peter is challenged to put his denial behind him and to be a preacher of the Resurrection! And James, the brother of our Lord, who thought so much of Messianic fulfillment, must now become a witness to the Lord in the full sense of the word — the first martyr put to death for proclaiming the Resurrection reality! And Paul, the persecutor of the Church of Jesus Christ - the angry man, who went from Jerusalem to Damascus to bring back Christ's followers in chains - he must confess Him and say that he GLORIES ONLY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND IN THE RESURRECTION HOPE.

New definitions of death will have to be written in the days ahead. Am I still living when a transplanted heart from another man beats on within my breas Or is the other man really living in me - and I am the one who died? Death and Life will become more and more intermingled and mixed. They have their real meaning and definition ONLY in RELATIONSHIP TO GOD! In other words, DEATH means FINAL AND TOTAL SEPARATION FROM GOD - a completion of that which SIN does in our hearts. In that kind of separation I may still continue to exist, but I am

really dead and separated from God. There is no life in us, but "THE LIFE I NOW LIVE I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LIVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME

True life, therefore, means fellowship with the living God - forgiveness of sins - redemption from guilt - being children of God in the fullest sense of the word! God calls Himself the "GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB," because they all live in Him — and He is the "RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."

"WE HAVE WAITED FOR THIS!" There are things coming in our own lives which will need a deep. strong FAITH - a kind of personal Easter - a personal Resurrection - a living beyond pain and persecution in the GLORY OF THE RISEN LORD! That means that never again will the pains of any illness - or the fears of any dangers - or the doubts of any dark hour - turn us away from the EASTER in our life! We have Him personally just as the disciples did! All demands for making this more real are already a weakness and the beginning of a new separation from God!

Therefore the only thing I can say to you today is: "CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!" "LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION!" Amen.