The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord
Rolling Meadows - 1976

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IN NOMINE JESU

ST. MARK 16: 5-7 "AND ENTERING THE TOMB, THEY SAW A YOUNG MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE, DRESSED IN A WHITE ROBE; AND THEY WERE AMAZED. AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'DO NOT BE AMAZED; YOU SEEK JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHO WAS CRUCIFIED. HE HAS RISEN, HE IS NOT HERE; SEE THE PLACE WHERE THEY LAID HIM. BUT GO, TELL HIS DISCIPLES AND PETER THAT HE IS GOING BEFORE YOU TO GALILEE; THERE YOU WILL SEE HIM, AS HE TOLD YOU.

God comes to greet us again with the unbelievable message: "CHRIST IS RISEN!" Again? Yes, again. So MANY TIMES He has come with this message. It has not been HELD BACK behind the JOYS and SONGS of EASTER ALONE. HOW MANY TIMES have you heard about the RESURRECTION and ITS GLORY? It was PRAYED INTO YOUR HEARTS in a time when ILLNESS came to your home. And when your LOVED ONES came to their LAST HOURS -- AGAIN HE CAME! And so AGAIN TODAY there is the SAME MESSAGE: "HE LIVES!" -- "HE IS ALIVE FOREVERMORE!" Again God takes the chance that this will be the Holy Spirit's time to tell you that you CANNOT LIVE MUCH LONGER without SINCERE FAITH in the GLORY OF THESE WORDS.

This was once the THEME of EVERY CHRISTIAN SERMON. They did not venture to PREACH ANYTHING ELSE except THIS as the TRIUMPH of "CHRIST CRUCIFIED." This was the MASTER MOTIVE of EVERY ACT of CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM! They SPOKE because they had seen CHRIST ALIVE! NOT ONE LINE of the BLESSED GOSPELS -- NOT ONE LINE of the LEARNED EPISTLES -- NOT ONE LINE of the HEROIC ACTS -- NOT ONE LINE of the PROPHETIC APOCALYPSE -- was written apart from the CONVICTION that HE of Whom these things were being written "HAD CONQUERED DEATH AND WAS ALIVE FOREVER!" The one and only God the Apostles KNEW and WORSHIPED and PREACHED was THE GOD OF THE RESURRECTION!

THE RESURRECTION meant that the WORLD HAD DIED IN THE NIGHT and had been REBORN with the GLORY OF THE ANGEL'S VOICE! THE RESURRECTION meant that MAN HAD DIED IN THE DARK and had been REBORN in order to see HIS SAVIOR ALIVE with the EYES OF FAITH! THE RESURRECTION meant that FEAR HAD DIED IN THE DARK and FAITH HAD BEEN REBORN to KNOW HIM and LOVE HIM and BE WITH HIM Who is ALIVE FOREVERMORE!..... So the APOSTLES went out to PREACH -- knowing that in the RESURRECTION the NEW AGE had arrived. Every NEW MAN who was joined to them in their PREACHING was struck by the ADMONITION which ST. PAUL gave to TIMOTHY: "REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST, RISEN FROM THE DEAD." "Don't you dare forget -- or your preaching will become EMPTY as your HEART IS EMPTY - as your FAITH IS EMPTY -- unless JESUS CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD!"

"THE LORD IS RISEN!" No one would know the BLESSED NAME OF JESUS if He had not RISEN FROM THE DEAD. He might have been REMEMBERED IN HIS TIME for ALL HIS WORKS -- but NO ONE would REMEMBER HIM TWO THOUSAND YEARS LATER..... Have you ever thought of this -- that UNLESS JESUS HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD, NO CONGREGATION would have been founded - NO GOSPEL would have been preached - NO EPISTLE would have been written? NONE OF THESE BLESSINGS would be upon us now UNLESS THE APOSTLES' FAITH had been REKINDLED AND REBORN in the OPEN GRAVE..... LIKE A FLAME it runs over the world from NATION TO NATION -- from KINGDOM TO KINGDOM -- across the ISLANDS OF THE SEAS -- into COUNTRIES STILL UNKNOWN ---- "WE HAVE SEEN JESUS ALIVE!"

OUT OF THE GRAVE OF CHRIST the FAITH OF THE APOSTLES arose! OUT OF THE GRAVE OF CHRIST the GOSPEL AND ITS PREACHING arose! OUT OF THE GRAVE OF CHRIST the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST arose!..... It is NO SURPRISE that they decided that EVERY SUNDAY they would RENEW THE WONDER -- they would REFRESH THEMSELVES at the MIRACLE -- they would SAY IT AGAIN to one another: "CHRIST IS ALIVE!"

Here was SOMETHING NEW! Now they have COMFORT FOR MOURNERS and GLORY FOR MARTYRS. Now a NEW SONG sounds in the HAUNTS OF DEATH: "CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!"

What a difference to BREAK AWAY FROM THE WEAK SENTIMENTALITY of MOURNING MEN seeking to comfort one another with EMPTY WORDS..... This has the RING OF TRUMPETS in it. This is the GLORY OF GOD - when CHRIST COMES ALIVE on Easter Day!

HOW STRANGE IT SEEMS -- GOD HAS SPOKEN THE WORD that can MAKE A MAN CONTENT even with PARTING and THE GRAVE. He SPOKE IT when He RAISED UP CHRIST and made Him "THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT."..... DREAM ON then -- YOUR DULL SENSES -- that LIFE HAS AN END IN THE GRAVE! BEAT YOURSELF DOWN with the STUPIDITY which says THERE IS NO RESURRECTION! LIMIT YOUR LIFE, if you must -- BUT DON'T LIMIT GOD and the FAITH OF A MAN who TRUSTS THIS WORD: "THE LORD IS RISEN!"

Early Easter Morning the WOMEN are going to the TOMB. They are SAD and AFRAID. They have all sorts of QUESTIONS: "WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THE STONE FOR US FROM THE DOOR OF THE TOMB?" They had a feeling of a SENSELESS, LOSING, HOPELESS BATTLE against SIN AND DEATH. There seemed to be NO HOPE -- for it was OBVIOUS that HATEFUL MEN WERE IN POWER -- MEN like HEROD, AND PILATE, AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS, AND PHARISEES..... GOD SEEMED FAR AWAY.

THEN CAME THE ANSWER! The ANGEL'S VOICE had only ONE MISSION -- and that was to MAKE THE MESSAGE REAL. He was there to say that THE SAVIOR HAD COME INTO THE WORLD WHEN CHRIST WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM. He was there to say that CHRIST WAS ALIVE and that HE HAD FULFILLED EVERY WORD OF HIS PROMISES TO THEM and that HE WOULD SEE THEM AGAIN. "DO NOT BE AMAZED; YOU SEEK JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHO WAS CRUCIFIED. HE HAS RISEN, HE IS NOT HERE; SEE THE PLACE WHERE THEY LAID HIM."

Out of the DARKNESS OF CALVARY He had cried out: "IT IS FINISHED!" The TRIUMPH OF HIS SUFFERING -- the COMPLETION OF THE GREAT WORK WHICH HE CAME TO DO -- the VERIFICATION OF THE ANGELS' SONG: "A SAVIOR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD" ------ is now assured: "HE HAS RISEN, HE IS NOT HERE; SEE THE PLACE WHERE THEY LAID HIM!"

WHAT WILL YOU DO -- without the SURENESS OF THE RISEN CHRIST? Can there be ANY MEANING

IN YOUR LIFE -- when TOMORROW it may ALL END with a GRIM SUDDENNESS and YOU SHOULD BE DESTROYED FOREVER? ..... The point is that EITHER YOU MUST BELIEVE THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL: "HE HAS RISEN" -- OR THERE IS NOTHING FOR YOU!

So EASTER shall be -- by the GRACE OF GOD -- a NEW AND GLORIOUS DAY OF FAITH FOR ME AND YOU. It can do things that NOTHING ELSE HAS EVER DONE BEFORE. It GIVES YOU HOPE - when you SEE HIM ALIVE AND RISEN -- for Whom the ANGELS CAME, and PREACHED, and SANG.

Amen.