

Week of Easter Sunday

First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the Proper and assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.

Weekly Catechism section: *Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer Luther's Small Catechism)*

Hymn of the Week: *Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands (TLH 195)*



Monday - Introit (Psalm 139:18, 5-6, 1-2, 8, 10)

Read Psalm 139.

Our *Introit* comes from Psalm 139. The Psalms are prophecies about Christ, but they are also prayers of the saints. So we might ask whether this Psalm is a prophecy of Christ or a prayer of the saints. The answer is both. The Christian may confidently pray, even at the point of death, "When I awake I am still with you." This is because Christ was not abandoned to rot in the grave. Christ fulfilled this prayer for every believer when he rose from the dead. Even though he was forsaken by God on behalf of all sinners, he was never separated from God. His resurrection proves this. Jesus is the Son of God who assumed for himself our very human nature. He was fearfully and wonderfully made in the womb of the Virgin Mary, even though he, as the Son of God, was never made. He is the maker of all things, and yet he was not ashamed to be made man. This means that he is not ashamed to pray this Psalm, and even fulfill it for all of us.

The *Introit* goes on: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it." But Jesus knows all things. He is God in the flesh. How could he honestly pray this? In his humiliation he did not make use of his full divine knowledge. Instead, he simply trusted in the Word of his Father. He endured the pain of the cross as well as the great fear and torment of death and condemnation. He humbled himself so that he could, with us, be far below the angels. He was able to pray this in his humiliation. But now in his Resurrection, in his exalted state, he teaches us to trust as he trusted. God's promise to save us is an article of faith. That God has created us, sent his Son into the flesh to die for us, that he raised him from the dead -- these are all far above our human reason. There are many witnesses to these mighty works of God, but that Christ died to take away our sins and was raised to declare us righteous in God's sight is a great mystery to us. It can only be grasped by faith. This is the faith by which Jesus lived and died in his great humility. And

this same faith is bestowed on us by the Spirit of the living Christ who freely gives us his Word.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Job 19:23-27)

Read Job 19.

Job's faith and anticipation are the same faith and hope God gives to us. He knows that his Redeemer lives. Even though he could not see it, and it has not been fulfilled in time, Job could assert it because he had God's promise. God promised that the Seed would be bruised, but he also promised that the Seed would bring blessing to all nations. Job trusted in this promise given to the patriarchs of his day. He could therefore assert it as true with more confidence than his heart could handle. And inspired by the Holy Spirit, he prophesied what would be engraved in the book of Scriptures, which cannot be broken. He declared what was engraved on the sealed tomb when the risen Christ passed through on Easter Sunday. He preached what the angel proclaimed to the women at the tomb: "He is risen."

Yes, this is the same confidence we have today. In fact, we have the fulfillment of what Job foretold. He have the multiple witnesses of the resurrection of our Lord. We know that our Redeemer lives. And yet, through faith in this fulfilled Word, we have confidence not only in the fact of the event, but also that though our flesh is destroyed, yet in our flesh we shall see God. We have the salvation of Christ declared from the empty tomb. This is not only knowledge of the historical fact, but the sure promise attached to the event. Our faith is not merely in the reliability of the witnesses, but the fulfilled prophetic Word. So when your flesh decays, and you face death, rejoice! Because this is only a sign that the prophesy of Job is being fulfilled. Though your outward man wastes away, your inner man is renewed. Or as Jesus says, unless a seed falls to the ground and dies then it does not bear fruit. So as Christians this is how we think of the resurrection. We don't simply say, "It is historically reliable; therefore it happened." Certainly, it is historically reliable, and the witnesses confirm this. But as Christians we think in the following way. Christ, the Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed, paying the debt of our sins and fulfilling the Scriptures. Therefore, he is risen. Just so, we die with Christ in our baptism into him. Therefore, we too shall rise. Alleluia!

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Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 118:24, 1)

Read Psalm 118.

Our *Gradual* for Easter Sunday comes from Psalm 118. There are few places in Scripture we quote as much as Psalm 118. Here is where we get the words from the *Sanctus*, "Hosanna!" and "Blessed it he who comes in the name of the Lord!" This Psalm also speaks of the stone the builders rejected becoming the chief corner stone. And of course, as we sing in our *Gradual*, there are the familiar words we pray at the dinner table: "Oh, give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever." As we meditate on this Psalm during Easter, let us focus in on these particular words: "This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Ever since Jesus rose from the dead on the day after the Sabbath after his death on the cross, Sunday has been known among the Apostles and the church as "The Lord's Day." Now, of course, in Christ every day is blessed. We need not rejoice only in one day of the week, as if we transferred the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Everyday we may find our rest in Christ, who died to take away our sins and is risen to declare to use eternal life. And yet, it is still good for us to consider Sunday an especially significant day. This is the day our Lord rose from the dead, bursting from the tomb as the first fruit of our salvation. This means that every Sunday we celebrate our Lord's Resurrection. It is a good and salutary tradition, dating all the way back to the Apostles, that Christians gather on Sunday mornings. The celebration of Jesus' resurrection continues. It is the day the Lord has made. He has sanctified this day -- and thereby all days -- by his glorious resurrection from the dead. So let us rejoice in it! May we never forget this when we gather around his Word and sacraments! Yes, it can be easy to forget this joy, especially when the Word of our Savior is so often rejected, and perhaps the celebrations don't seem as big and vibrant as they used to be. But Christ was rejected by men, and he has become the Chief Cornerstone. It is marvelous in our sight. So give thanks to the Lord! Because he is good! And his mercy endures forever! Amen.

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Thursday - Epistle (*1 Corinthians 5:6-8*)

Read 1 Corinthians 5.

Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. All the feasts of the Old Testament were shadows of the true feast by which we would feed on our Lord Jesus. The Passover was a celebration of God's gracious act by which he saved the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. When he was about to kill the firstborn son of every house, he told the children of Israel to spread the blood of the lamb on their doorposts so that the angel of death would pass over (Ex 12:23). But now, Christ is our Passover Lamb, which means that his blood now marks the door of our hearts. And because he is risen from the dead, we can with all boldness, sincerity, and truth, feast on our Lord Jesus, knowing that death has passed over.

To feast on Jesus is to listen to his Word and believe it. It means that we make use of his means of salvation. We are baptized into his precious name, and we eat his body and blood, which he continues to give to us as a sure pledge and token of the forgiveness and salvation that he won for us. This is what our Lord means when he says (John 6:35), "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Those who cling to the risen Lord with the confidence of his resurrection, who hear his Word, learn from him, depend on him, and are nourished by his Sacrament - these are they who feast in sincerity and truth. As Jesus says, they worship the Father in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (1 Tim 3:16) also delivers to us his eternal life. The Spirit of truth leads us to be truthful about our own death-meriting sin even as he makes us partakers in our Lord's life-giving innocence. Such a feast has no malice or deceit, which only divide and harden hearts. Rather, feasting on Christ leads us to love and honesty toward one another. It purges out the evil leaven of our hearts, and it unites us all in Christ. As we sing in the hymn: Now his grace to us imparts/ Eternal sunshine to our hearts;/ The night of sin is ended. Alleluia!

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Friday - Alleluia Verse (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Read 1 Corinthians 5 again.

Our *Alleluia* returns today with a portion from 1st Corinthians 5:7-8. St. Paul writes: "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Paul refers to the Lord's Supper, which he addresses in more detail in chapters 10 and 11. The main concern throughout his epistle is that the Corinthians agree (1 Cor 1:10). The Lord's Supper is not meant to be taken by those who disagree on God's Word. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for doing this very thing (1 Cor 11:18). The Lord's Supper is the very body and blood of Christ, which was sacrificed for our sins. He is the Lamb of God, *pure* and holy. So for us to celebrate the Lord's Supper together, especially on Easter Sunday, with each having his own opinion about the gospel and the sacraments, would be a mockery of the gospel and of our Lord's Resurrection. In this immediate context Paul was addressing the Corinthians' refusal to deal with a member who was committing an especially vile form of adultery. They were too proud to deal with the sin in their midst. So Paul rebuked them. But then he gave this gracious appeal. Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. He is pure, without any leaven or yeast of sin or error. Yet, he bore all the sin of the world on himself. He was honest about our sins, and he took them away by his bitter suffering and death.

This is why the day of our Lord's Resurrection is a feast of sincerity and truth. Jesus didn't cover up our sins with a lie. He covered them with his pure, holy, and innocent blood. His Resurrection proves this to be true. It is a joyful day when we confess from hearts, which know the truth of sin and death yet also know the even greater truth of our Lord's redemption. As true as his body burst from the tomb, our confession is true as we share his body in the bread.

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Saturday - Gospel (Mark 16:1-8)

Read one or more of the resurrection accounts (Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20).

"Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluiah!**" This is the refrain many churches practice during the time of Easter. It's a very good refrain. Jesus has truly risen from the dead. He isn't just alive in your heart. He rose, both body and soul, from the grave. And what does this mean for you? It means that Jesus' sacrifice to God was accepted. When he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, God was declaring to the whole world that Jesus was vindicated -- absolved -- of all the sin that he bore (1 Tim 3:16).

St. Paul expresses it in this way, "[Jesus] was put to death because of our sins and raised again because of our justification" (Rom 4:25). Jesus' death accomplished for us the righteousness that we need to stand before God. He accomplished this for the entire world (1 John 2:2). Jesus satisfied the righteous anger of the Triune God -- including his own divine anger as the Son of God -- by dying for our sins. And so the prophet Isaiah says (53:10b-11a), "When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied." God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was satisfied by Jesus' death, and so he put away our sins and declared us righteous.

This righteousness is already accomplished for us. It is finished, just as Jesus said on the cross. And the resurrection is the proof that the transaction went through. We therefore receive this righteousness freely through faith (Rom 3:21ff; 4:5; Gal 2:16), just as Isaiah also says (53:11b), "By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities." And we eat the Supper of our Lord, which serves as the testament to us of Christ's death and resurrection, upon which our sins are forgiven, and we stand in God's favor. So we say it again, "Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluiah!**"

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Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands

195

Acts 2: 24

Christ lag in Todesbanden

Martin Luther, 1524, cento

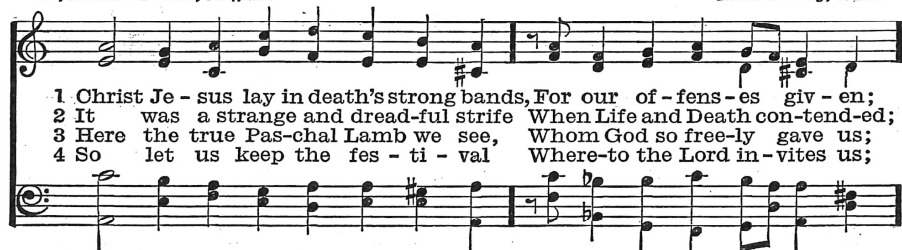
Tr., Richard Massie, 1854, alt.

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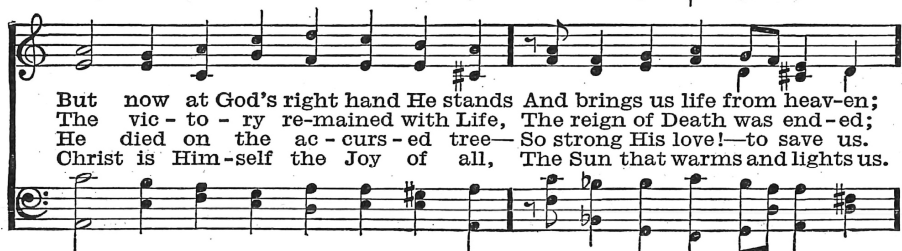
Christ lag in Todesbanden

Based on "Christ ist erstanden"

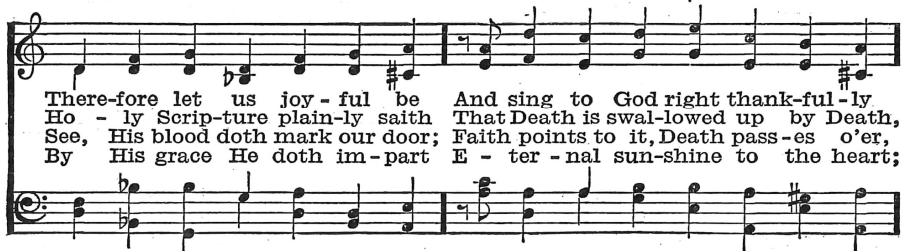
Latin melody, c. 1100



1 Christ Je - sus lay in death's strong bands, For our of - fens - es giv - en;
 2 It was a strange and dread - ful strife When Life and Death con - tend - ed;
 3 Here the true Pas - chal Lamb we see, Whom God so free - ly gave us;
 4 So let us keep the fes - ti - val Where - to the Lord in - vites us;



But now at God's right hand He stands And brings us life from heav - en;
 The vic - to - ry re - main - ed with Life, The reign of Death was end - ed;
 He died on the ac - curs - ed tree— So strong His love!— to save us.
 Christ is Him - self the Joy of all, The Sun that warms and lights us.



There - fore let us joy - ful be And sing to God right thank - ful - ly
 Ho - ly Scrip - ture plain - ly saith That Death is swal - low - ed up by Death,
 See, His blood doth mark our door; Faith points to it, Death pass - es o'er,
 By His grace He doth im - part E - ter - nal sun - shine to the heart;



Loud songs of hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah!
 His sting is lost for - ev - er. Hal - le - lu - jah!
 And Sa - tan can - not harm us. Hal - le - lu - jah!
 The night of sin is end - ed. Hal - le - lu - jah! A - men

5 Then let us feast this Easter Day
 On Christ, the Bread of heaven;
 The Word of Grace hath purged away
 The old and evil leaven.
 Christ alone our souls will feed,
 He is our meat and drink indeed;
 Faith lives upon no other. Hallelujah!