Sermon transcript

Meeting start 1991-04-06 19:30
Broadcast date 2026-08-08 19:30
Location Krefeld, Germany

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preached on 06. 04. 1991, 19:30, Krefeld, Germany

Topic: Matthew 28:5–20: "Jesus' Resurrection – He is not here; for He is risen!"

broadcast on 8. 8. 2026

Today we will be looking mainly at Matthew 28. But before we get into that, let me read once more from 1 John chapter 3 and also chapter 4. Two verses and then one verse. 1 John chapter 3, verses 19 and 20:

[19] ***And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.***

[20] ***For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.***

I have read this, because in a gathering such as this, there is always the possibility, that there are still people here, who are experiencing some kind of distress, something in their lives, perhaps a slight sense of condemnation over things they have done, that have not yet been forgiven. And that is why I have read this scripture. "***Even if our heart should condemn us, God is greater.***" [1 Jon 3:20] For he has indeed taken away our condemnation in Christ. He has let mercy prevail over justice. He lets the guilty go free.

That is, after all, the very heart of the proclamation of the gospel, that God has acquitted the condemned. It is true, we have become guilty, we were already guilty when we came into this world and have lived in guilt and transgression. Yet he, our Lord and Saviour, has taken all our guilt and transgression away and was made to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. [2 Cor 5:21]

Look no longer at yourselves and your guilt. Look to the Lord, who bore the guilt of us all, as it is written in Isaiah 53, and as it was fulfilled on the cross of Calvary. John expressed it in these words: ***"Behold, this is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world,"*** and we believe this with all our hearts. [Joh 1:29]

From 1 John chapter 4, verse 10:

[10] ***Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.***

This brings to mind John 3, verse 16:

[16] ***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

Now we come to our meditation on the Word and shall read from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28. We could actually read the whole chapter as it deals with the resurrection. Let us begin here with verse 5, first verses 5 and 6:

[5] ***And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified;***

[6] ***He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.***

What a marvellous testimony. As we have often said, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord, is indeed the seal, the crowning glory of the entire work of redemption that took place for us on the cross of Calvary. It was not merely a matter of our being reconciled to God, of our guilt being blotted out, of our finding grace. It was about more than that, it was about death and the devil being defeated and overcome, about the sting of death being removed, so that later, and to this day, and for all eternity, it might be said: ***"O death, where is thy sting? O hell, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** [1 Cor 15:55, 57]

But it was precisely the resurrection that was the triumph, the proof, the glorious proof that death and hell have been defeated and overcome. When we think of the other religious leaders and founders, death has swallowed them all up, nothing more has been heard of them, yet here was one who was more than a man. He was human, he was a prophet, he was many things, but he was the Lord of glory, who had taken the form of a servant.

Here it says: ***"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*** [Mt 28:6] True believers need not shy away from or fear the evidence. They can call people over and say: "Come, see for yourselves, it really has happened." We rejoice in this, "***Come, see the place where he lay. Now he is no longer here, he has risen, just as he said.***"

Let us now read verses 7 and 8:

[7] ***And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. And behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, lo, I have told you.***

[8] ***And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.***

Both fear and joy were within them, and did run to bring his disciples word. "***Go and tell his disciples that he will go before them to Galilee.***" He did not merely say that he would rise again, he also said where he would meet his disciples after his resurrection. We shall read shortly where this was further confirmed.

Verses 9 and 10 read:

[9] ***And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail!***

I am delighted by the phrase we have just read together: "***Jesus came to meet them.***" Where on earth is there a person seeking him whom he would not go out to meet so that they might find him? It is written: ***"Before they seek me, I will let them find me."*** [Isa 65:1] And again it is written: ***"And if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me."*** [Jer 29:13] And again it is written: ***"Seek the Lord, whilst he may be found."*** Isaiah 55. [Isa 55:6] I shall read verses 9 and 10 once more:

[9] ***And behold, Jesus met them...***

Do take this to heart today, my dear friend. Believe that he is already coming to meet you too. If you are on the path and seeking him, then know today that he is already coming to meet you, to welcome you, to greet you, as it is written here. "***And behold, Jesus came to meet them, saying: Greetings."*** [Mt 28:9] He greets us today as well. And he goes on to say, "***and they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him.***" [Mt 28:9]

We know the story from John 20 about Thomas, when he was allowed to place his hands into the Lord's wounds, and then exclaimed: ***"My Lord and my God."*** [Joh 20:28] To him the Lord said: ***"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*** [Joh 20:29] Here there were some who saw the Lord as the risen one.

Verse 10 reads:

[10] ***Then saith Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.***

Beloved, we must be where the Lord has promised us that he too will be, and where we can meet him. In the Old Testament God had said where certain things were to take place, where he would place his name, and when and where he would reveal himself to his people. He also said: ***"Only at the place I shall choose shall I meet with you; there I will speak with you."*** [Exo 20:24; Deu 12:5] We must realize that we do not seek God throughout the whole world, but seek and find him in his personal revelation, which came to us for our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. For thus it is written: ***"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself."*** [2 Cor 5:19]

In Matthew 28 we now read from verse 16:

[16] ***Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them.***

It had after all been said twice before that he would meet them in Galilee. Now we read:

[16] ***Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them.***

[17] ***And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.***

That can happen too. Thomas also found it hard to believe the others. And here it even happens amongst those who came to the Lord, that it is incomprehensible, inconceivable to them, that this should now have happened. And yet it had happened.

Our Lord has risen from the dead. It is not just a story. It is true. And that is why we can proclaim these biblical truths with such conviction. After all, it is not about us; it is about what God has done for us.

And I believe we must understand this once and for all and take to heart what God's true purpose is for us. God's path to us is one thing, and our path to God is another. If God had not come to us, we could never have come to Him. A bridge had to be built, and no human being could do that. The Lord of glory alone was able to do this.

And if we now delve deeper into the Word, for example in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 1 we read: "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh.***"

When we read this, we may simply move on to the next item on the agenda without giving it any further thought.

We simply must grasp what actually happened. Throughout the entire Old Testament, beginning with a promise in Genesis 3, verse 15 up to the last one in the prophet Malachi, chapter 3, verse 1, we have a great number of promises, all of which had to be fulfilled. The seed of God was to come through the woman to crush the head of the serpent that had wrought havoc in the Garden of Eden, and to deliver us from the serpent's bite altogether, to cleanse us from sin and restore us to fellowship with God. That is why all of this was necessary, not only that in general, but now the Word, the Logos, who in the beginning proceeded from the fullness of God, the active, speaking Lord Yahweh became flesh, in Him, the Word made flesh, every other word that referred to Him has become flesh and through Him become divine reality here on this earth. [Joh 1:14]

How can this be expressed? With God's help, let us read a few scriptures, before we return to Matthew 28, from Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14. Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14:

[14] ***Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.***

That was a promise, this promise has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord, you can read about it in the Gospel of Luke, in the Gospel of Matthew.

What is written here has been confirmed, Isaiah chapter 9, verses 5 and 6:

[5] ***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.***

[6] ***Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.***

There were many prophecies in Holy Scripture, all of which have come true. In the Word made flesh, all the words of God that referred to him have been fulfilled, becoming divine reality.

We must see it in this light, in order to then realize that now, at the end of the time of grace, through the church, which is the body of the Lord, every promise given to us must also be fulfilled. There is no way round this. It is easy to say that the bride is to be and will be a Word bride. But it is not enough for us merely to say it, or proclaim it, or perhaps even believe it. We must look forward to it and experience it. The Scripture that was promised to us must find its divine fulfillment and confirmation through us.

Have we grasped this? Just as everything spoken by our Lord was fulfilled, so too must it happen with us. Who is not familiar with a scripture from the prophet Micah, where it is written that the Lord would be born, namely in Bethlehem? I shall read this scripture very briefly without going into further detail. Micah 5, verse 1:

[1] ***But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.***

It could not be any other city, any other place. It had to be Bethlehem, because the Lord had spoken it so. Everything that is written is fulfilled literally and exactly as it was spoken in the Word of God.

As for the Lord's ministry, we read in the prophet Isaiah, in chapter 35, exactly what would happen. Isaiah chapter 35, from verse 3:

[3] ***Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.***

[4] ***Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come... Behold, your God will come. He will come and save you.***

It could not have been stated more clearly.

The Jews, if I may say so, expect the Messiah to be a man, much like David, an outstanding man amongst the people. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture,

the Messiah is the Lord himself, revealed in the flesh in the form of a servant for the sake of mankind. And that is why Holy Scripture also says, through the prophet Zechariah, that when the Jews then behold the Lord, there will be a great cry of woe amongst them. [Zec 12:10] There will be such weeping and lamentation, I shall read it to you. From the prophet Zechariah, chapter 12. Zechariah 12, verse 10.

Yes, verse 10 suffices, Zechariah 12, verse 10:

[10] ***And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.***

We shall not go into detail here, but once again it is the scribes who have no revelation through the Spirit. Who amongst us listened carefully when we read Isaiah chapter 9, verses 5 and 6? It is not enough merely to read, one must take it in and also understand what one is reading. "***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder***," and then we are told who this child is, and then it says, "***Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,***" and to this we say Amen, just as we do to every other word of God.

In Isaiah 35, just the next few verses, Isaiah 35, from verse 5, concerning the Lord's ministry:

[5] ***Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.***

[6] ***Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.***

So everything has been stated precisely, but what we are concerned with here this evening is this. It is not merely that we know the prophets said this, or that God spoke it through them, but that it came true. The promise, the announcement in the Word, corresponded 100% with its actual fulfillment. It was spot on. Anyone who works in the printing trade knows what it means when one says spot on. Then it has to be accurate to a hundredth of a millimeter. And we can say with all our hearts it is 100% accurate. The predictions, the announcements, the prophecies, the entire accounts, all of them correspond exactly with the actual fulfillment.

And I would like to emphasize here that the New Testament was not simply written to make it fit with the Old Testament. Those poor fishermen and tax collectors who wrote it knew just as little about the Old Testament as all of us sitting or standing here today. They wrote down what they had seen, heard and experienced. The Old Testament, as we read in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, had remained hidden from them. They had no idea what was happening. And only then did the Lord open their understanding for the Scriptures. [Luk 24:45] And then He began

to explain to them, starting with Moses and all the prophets, what had taken place and was now being fulfilled. [Luk 24:27] Nobody needed to make anything fit. It fitted perfectly, 100%.

Blessed is the person who can give glory to God, in awe and respect and simply say: "Lord, You are an all-knowing God. You have the whole of history and have had written down in advance what was to happen according to your plan of salvation."

From Hebrews 10, I would like to read two Scriptures to highlight what the incarnation of our Lord, the Son of God, was all about. And then also read about our calling from the same chapter. Hebrews 10. We begin here with verse 5. Hebrews 10 from verse 5:

[5] ***Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He says, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not; but a body hast Thou prepared me.***

[6] ***In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.***

[7] ***Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.***

[8] ***Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law.***

[9] ***Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.***

[9] ***He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second,***

[10] ***By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***

What a marvellous Word! There was no human being, no prophet, not even one in whom nothing could be found to fault, who was capable of doing God's will perfectly. For as we said earlier, every human being has come into this world burdened with sin in exactly the same way. Now someone had to come, who says: ***"In the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do Thy will, O God."*** [Heb 10:7]

In the Old Testament many tried to fulfil God's will. Offering sacrifices, sin offerings, burnt offerings, anyone who reads about all the sacrifices in Leviticus will see that there were many of them. Then, right at the end, the Lord says: ***"In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin I had no pleasure."*** And then the Redeemer steps in, our Lord, the Lamb of God, and says: ***"Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God."*** It was God's will that all people might be helped, that all might be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. [1Tim 2:4] And our Lord, in His incarnation, had this task, not only to be God manifested in the flesh, but as the Son of Man and Son of God, to be obedient unto the death on the cross, and to fulfill God's will hundred percent without any ifs or buts.

And thus it came to pass, and for this we are grateful to God, as it is written here: ***"By the witch will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*** [Heb 10:10]

Rejoice in this. Salvation has indeed been accomplished. All that is needed is to accept what God has already done. It is finished. It has happened. In the Old Testament it says: ***"I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are Mine."*** [Isa 43:1] In the New Testament we can say it with even greater certainty, Golgotha is after all divine reality. And so we may receive the Lord as our Saviour by faith, and then exclaim with Paul: ***"To live is Christ and to die is gain."*** [Phil 1:21]

Here we are now told of the will of God which our Lord and Saviour has accomplished. In verses 36 and 37 we are called upon to do the will of God. Hebrews 10, 36 and 37:

[36] ***For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.***

[37] ***For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.***

We note that before the Lord's return God's will must be done on earth once more through the Church of the Living God as it is done in heaven. Many pray ***"Thy will be done"*** on earth as it is in heaven, but they do not know the will of God. They are in a sense bound by religions and traditions and have not yet experienced God in a personal way. Hence the proclamation of the Gospel, so that people may be brought into a personal relationship with God, experience their personal conversion and undergo renewal and new birth, thereby entering into fellowship with God.

There is also a scripture in the Gospel of John, in chapter 4, which speaks of food. And Jesus says in John 4, verse 34:

[34] ***My food is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.***

If we add the scripture, ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"*** [Mat 4:4], then this must not remain merely a matter of reflection. The Word of God must become a reality in our lives, for this is how it was in the life of our Lord and Saviour.

[34] ***My food is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.***

In John chapter 7, John 7, verse 16 it says. John 7, verse 16:

[16] ***Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.***

[17] ***If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.***

What is written here still holds true today. Only those who are wholeheartedly prepared to do God's will, not merely to become religious, perhaps out of fear that things might eventually go downhill or come to a complete collapse, but rather people who have experienced God, who have organized their lives with Him and as far as possible with others and who have but one desire to be found in His will. And these are the ones to whom God will reveal whether what has been and is being taught comes from God or not. A person must receive the connection to the Word from the Spirit who inspired and dictated it, and that is the Holy Spirit. And so one person cannot teach another. Rather, as mentioned earlier, it is written in the Old and New Testament, "***they will all be taught by God.***" [Isa 54:13; Joh 6:45]

When we sit in a hall like this, the first question for those coming for the first time is, why yet another new movement? Why not the traditional churches or Christian fellowships? It simply must be stated clearly, without passing judgment. God does as He pleases on earth. Only those who listen to His voice will in a sense form the flock of His pasture. For this is what He said, ***"My sheep hear My voice."*** [Joh 10:27] And God does not dwell in temples made by human hands, He dwells in the hearts of those who have given their hearts to Him. [Acts 17:24]

The point is that the Word of God can be proclaimed in its original form and manner, without any ifs or buts. And if we say here today that this is simply not possible in all places and in all churches, then you ladies and gentlemen and dear friends will simply believe from the bottom of our hearts that it is not possible. Imagine if I had the opportunity to speak in a church in this city and were to say and preach what is preached and said here, it would happen once and never again, unless I am mistaken. May it truly be the case that God still opens doors. I even believe in that. However, it will not be across the board, across all denominations, but individuals will be called out, namely those who are ready to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

We are now coming to the conclusion of this Gospel of Matthew, which not only began gloriously with the account of our Lord's resurrection, but also ends quite gloriously, and has not yet come to an end. The Great Commission, as it is written here, still applies. I shall read once more from Matthew 28, verse 16:

[16] ***Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.***

[17] ***And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.***

[18] ***And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.***

What a glorious statement. Death and hell had been defeated. We might read the words from Hebrews, that He might destroy the one who held the power of death until then, and has brought life and immortality to light. [2Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14] ***"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."*** [Mt 28:18]

I am one of those preachers of the Gospel who really do not like it when people speak of Satan's power. There are many who go on and on about Satan. "Satan did this, Satan did that." And for the most part, Satan has very little to do with it. Whatever has been done, we have probably done it ourselves. But people keep dwelling on Satan time and again. Just let him go. Don't concern yourselves with him.

And when a trial or temptation comes with God's help and strength, let us overcome it. And if things get really bad, let us say, ***"Satan, get thee behind me."*** [Mt 16:23] But let us focus on the Lord, look to Him and trust in Him, not in the power of Satan, which has been defeated, but in the omnipotence of God, through which Satan, death, hell and the devil have been defeated and overcome. And this has surely become clear in the resurrection. ***"I live and you shall live also."*** [Joh 14:19] And the Lord said to John on the island of Patmos, ***"I hold the keys of death and hell."*** [Rev 1:18] Let us nourish this faith with a message of victory from Golgotha, with a glorious message, which indeed John summarized so well in this instance.

"***Faith is the victory that has overcome the world***" [1 Joh 5:4], not one that will overcome, but one that has already overcome, that we may look to the overcomer, so that through him we too may become overcomers. May we look to the victor so that we too may belong to the victorious multitude, that we simply view divine matters in a truly positive light and give God the glory for them. When our Lord says, ***"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,"*** where then are all those dark powers, or what has become of them? They were defeated on the cross and publicly exposed, and God triumphed over them in Christ. [Col 2:15] I hoped to find it. I hadn't even thought that all these passages would be necessary.

Colossians chapter 2, Colossians chapter 2, verse 13:

[13] ***And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;***

Please, let's all say Amen to that. It is God's Word. God has forgiven all our trespasses. Let us agree with God. Let us believe it. And then it will be granted to us.

Verse 14:

[14] ***Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.***

And when did he nail it to the cross, and for what purpose?

[15] ***And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.***

So it is written in Colossians chapter 2, and so we believe it with all our hearts, because it is written in the word of God. Can we say Amen to that?

Having defeated all the powers, not just some, but all the powers, death, the devil, all the powers, having spoiled principalities and powers, not a partial surrender, negotiated somewhere, as a gentleman's agreement, and then signed. A total and complete surrender of the powers of darkness, and a perfect and complete victory for our God in Jesus Christ, our Lord. That took place on the cross of Calvary. And blessed is the person who can believe this, accept it, experience it and thank God for it. The moment we believe in this way, scripturally, the devil will give us a wide berth. For then we are God's living testimony to what happened at Golgotha. Have you understood that? That is faith. That is the faith which is also the victory that God has already given us. [1Joh 5:4]

One last verse from Matthew 28, perhaps in connection with the verse we have already read:

[18] ***All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.***

[19] ***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:***

[20] ***Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.***

Hallelujah. Blessed and praised be the name of the Lord. What divine power and authority underlie the great commission which we still carry out today. This is not about what a human being might be capable of. It is about, in union with Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, proclaiming the Gospel of Him, the Crucified and Risen One, to the whole world, trumpeting far and wide, that a great day of God's reconciliation with humanity took place on the cross of Calvary, and that we can proclaim with full conviction, ***"Be ye reconciled to God."*** [2Cor 5:20] Because all power in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, the Risen One, [Mt 28:18] He has sent His disciples and to this very day His messengers with this divine power and authority to proclaim His glorious Gospel. [Mt 28:19]

And we believe that the Risen One still confirms His Gospel today in those who believe it with all their hearts. I am aware that today we have difficult situations amongst us, cases of illness, hardships of various kinds, whether of the soul, the spirit or the body. Beloved, let us honour the Lord today through faith. Simply say yes from the heart to what God did in Christ on the cross of Calvary. He has redeemed our lives from destruction. He has crowned us with mercy and lovingkindness. He has healed all our infirmities. He has forgiven all our guilt and sin. There is only one thing left for us to do. To receive and accept this and to thank Him for it from the bottom of our hearts.

Matthew 28 is a marvellous chapter. Here the Risen One came to meet the people and in closing may I emphasize that once more. Please receive and accept this. Even today He comes to meet you and me, just as we have read here in the Word of God. "***And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings.***" [Mt 28:9]

He makes no accusations. He comes with no reproach. He is no Pharisee who says, "You have done this or that." He comes to forgive, to bestow grace, to grant salvation. He comes as the One He came to be, namely as our Saviour through whom we have been reconciled to God and all guilt and sin were blotted out on the cross of Calvary when our Lord shed His precious and holy blood there as the Lamb of God. He comes to meet you. Do not expect our Lord to be like other people. People make accusations, bring up this and that. Our Lord greets us. He says, Greetings. "***Then they went up to Him and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.***" [Mt 28:9]

There is nothing left for you and me to do but to embrace Him, to kneel before Him and to thank Him from the bottom of our hearts, perhaps to ask, "Lord, what moved you to do all this for me and for my sake?" "Lord, what did you see in me that made you think of me?" And at that very moment the tears already well up in our eyes, repentance and penance begin. We come to the Lord and say, "Forgive me and have mercy on me a sinner and receive me, accept me as your own." Even today the glorious proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ resounds just as it did almost 2000 years ago and we too may have our encounter with Him, the Risen One, today.

Believe it, He comes to meet those who have set out to seek and find Him. He is already coming to meet them. If we are here today to find Him, then we can know or are allowed to know that He is coming to meet us. Take this to heart personally and say, "Lord, I believe that You died for me on the cross of Calvary. I believe that God was in Christ and reconciled the world of which I am a part to Himself. I accept this reconciliation for myself personally as a gift of God's grace," and You will see how heavenly peace will enter Your hearts, so that You can sing as the hymn writer sings, "*When peace like a river attendeth my soul.*"

"***He is risen, come, see the place where He lay.***" [Mt 28:6]

He is no longer here, He is risen, He lives, and because He is risen and His tomb is empty, we too shall rise, and the tombs of all those who have fallen asleep in Christ will all be empty; there will be a glorious resurrection of all those who have gone before us, and a glorious transformation of all those who live in Christ; and together with them we shall then be caught up to meet the Lord and Saviour in the air, to be with Him forever. [1Cor 15:51-52; 1The 4:16-17]

There is no greater or more glorious time in the entire calendar year than the Easter season. It reminds us of what happened almost two thousand years ago, an event essential to our salvation, which no one who wishes to come to God can bypass. Anyone who bypasses what God has done here on earth in Christ for our salvation will forever and ever pass God by. There is only one who could say: ***"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me."*** [Joh 14:6] And so may we be granted today that we do not seek a path that leads past God, but rather the way, the truth and the life that comes from God and leads back

to God.

By grace we are allowed to be part of this. And we wish that many others may find their way to the Lord and likewise experience God's love and grace and thus be saved, just as has been promised and confirmed to us in the Word of God. May the blessing of the Almighty God rest upon us all so powerfully. May the divine reality of what took place on Golgotha and then right up to Easter Sunday be vividly present to us at this very hour, so that we may simply say: "Lord, you have redeemed me. You have defeated all the power of Satan." And we are subsequently able to say: ***"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."*** [Mt 28:18] And we believe that all power belongs to him and that he has conquered all powers, including the power of death.

And therefore we need not be afraid, but must believe in him who said: ***"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."*** [Joh 11:25] Amen. May God by his grace bring this about in us all. Amen.

Let us bow our heads and remain in silent prayer before God. Perhaps there is someone amongst us who would like to express the concern that lies on their heart by raising and lowering their hand so that we may pray with them. God sees the hands. He sees the hearts. He knows what it is all about. You do not need to say a word. He knows what it is all about. Believe now that he is already coming to meet you, to speak to you, to greet you and to give you what you ask of him, what you need, be it in your soul, in your spirit, in your body, earthly or spiritual, whatever it may be.

God is present. Our Lord said: ***"I am with you always, even to the end of the world."*** [Mt 28:20] He was, is and will be forever. He remains the same. [Heb 13:8] Today, having heard his voice, let us come to him, let us believe him, not merely pray but believe, just as every promise in the Word that referred to him was fulfilled through him and became divine reality, so may every word of God, this evening and for all time to come, every promise given to the Church, particularly concerning the fulfillment of the Great Commission, may all these promises be fulfilled, right up to our Lord's statement, which is almost beyond our comprehension: "***Whoever believes in me will do the works that I have done and even greater ones than these, because I go to the Father.***" [Joh 14:12]

And with what Paul writes, that God is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine. [Eph 3:20] God will not do less than he has promised. On the contrary, he will do what he has promised. And if we believe, he will do even more than we can ask or imagine, for the glory and praise of his holy name.

If we now unite in faith and offer him our worship, it may come to pass through the power of God as a confirmation of his Word and his presence amongst us. Let us pray in faith.

Lord our God, we are gathered here in reverence before your holy presence. We

believe the testimony of Scripture. We believe that everything has happened just as it was told to us. Every promise has come true, including that from the prophet Hosea: "***O death, I will be a pestilence to you. From the realm of the dead I will rescue them.***" [Hos 13:14]

You have done it. Thanks and glory be to you.

Faithful Lord, we are gathered here today in the glorious name of Jesus, not only to read, hear and reflect on what happened back then, but to draw divine blessings from it and experience them for ourselves. Lord, grant us now an encounter with you in your Word, in your Spirit, so that you may stand before us as a reality, as the Risen One, and greet us, calling out: ***"Peace be with you. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I hold the keys of death and hell."*** [Joh 20:19; Rev 1:18] To you, the victor of Golgotha, we give thanks today that you have disarmed all the powers of darkness, defeated them, put them to shame, and triumphed over them. [Col 2:15] Beloved Lord, may the power of God's resurrection now be revealed in our midst through faith in you and your Word.

Beloved Lord, may we be overwhelmed in your presence just as all were overwhelmed who heard you speak after you had risen. We have heard you speak to us today. We thank you for this, and we praise your marvelous name.

Beloved Savior, save the lost, set the captives free, and deliver them from the evil one that holds them captive, O Lord. May this be fulfilled: "***The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me to preach deliverance to the captives and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.***" [Isa 61:1-2; Luk 4:18-19]

Faithful God, we now give thanks to you together that you have heard us, that the lost have found salvation, the sick have been healed, and those who were bound may now be set free. For thus it is written: "***Whom the Son sets free is free indeed.***" [Joh 8:36]

Lord, in your name we proclaim the liberty you have brought us and the salvation you have given us. To you, the Almighty God, be praise and honor, glory and worship, now and forever. Hallelujah. Amen.