

Easter Sunday, 2009
Good Hope Lutheran Church
2 Corinthians 15: 1 – 2

Christ is Risen, alleluia. He is risen indeed, alleluia.

Grace mercy and peace be multiplied among you in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.

“We went to practice every single day, and we worked so hard!” said the little boy after the big game. “But we got creamed anyway! Alas! All my hard work was in vain!”

Now, unless his name just so happens to be wee Willie Shakespeare, it’s not terrible likely that many little boys these days would actually say “Alas! My hard work was in vain!” Few folks speak so formally anymore, even fewer among the young, and yet. Alas. We all know what this expression means, and even more we all know first hand what it feels like. We have all endured disappointment after all, we’ve all been let down by people, or by circumstances, or by “Life” itself. We all know the empty feeling that comes with watching your best efforts, just go down the drain.

You study for a test in school, you write some kind of term paper, you really put forth the effort and give it your best shot but your grade is low. Your grade, is not what you had hoped for. You do the work those years in school, you consistently get good grades, but when you finally graduate and get out into the real world so called, you can’t find a job. All your preparation, and there doesn’t seem to be any place that wants you! Then when you do finally land a job, you work and you work hard but there’s many a day. Many a day you feel unnoticed and unappreciated and you’re not sure how much of what you do really matters that much anyway. And oh yeah while you work, you also scrimp and save and put money away in a mutual fund, saving for your retirement, and how’d

that one pan out for you? Right. And in short you are left to wonder, all my hard work.

Alas, could it be, in vain?

And that's just the world of work, that is of course only one phase of life so to speak, one part of who you are. We also invest quite a bit in relationships, don't we? And they don't always pan out either. We have hopes and dreams for our marriages, hopes and dreams for our families, and our children, and we sink everything into this. It's what matters most to us! And yet, alas, we know, there are disappointments there as well. One moment in particular I remember, maybe the heartbreaking example possible, a terribly sad funeral service I conducted back over in Indiana. A young man not very old, someone's nearly adult son, killed in an accident. And to me the saddest part of that day was when his mom started reminiscing about homework, and lunch tickets, and misplaced gym shoes and all the rest, all the little things day in day out a parent does to raise a child, "and all of that," she said. "For this. All that for this, a funeral. Hopes and dreams and blood sweat and tears, for this, a funeral, alas," she cried. "It was all in vain."

And this I believe is what we hate and fear the most about death. It's not just that our lives one day end, which is maybe alarming enough. It's also, that life right now gets stripped of meaning. Life right now is emptied of purpose, it is emptied of hope, and promise, all we do. All we dream. Everything about us, just for this? A void, a big nothing, a funeral someday? Could it be, that all of life just goes down a cosmic drain somewhere, to be forgotten forever? Could it be, all of life, is lived in vain.

St Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 15. "I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the Good News that I proclaimed to you, Good News which you received and in which you stand, Good News through which you are being saved, if you hold to it firmly. Unless

you have come to believe, in vain.”

I would remind you of the Good News, Paul said, the news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on a cross of all things, and then on the 3rd day rose again from the dead. He died to forgive you, but rose again to save you! He rose again to open for you the way of everlasting life, you see death no longer gets the last word. Death no longer wins, Jesus does, Jesus wins, and because of Jesus what is out there waiting for those who believe is not a big void, or a big nothing, or a big cosmic sinkhole—no. What waits, is a big promise made by an even bigger God. What is out there waiting is a place and a time and a kingdom—a heavenly kingdom that now includes you and your loved ones and that really does not end. I mean this has got to be the headline, on Easter and every other day too—Jesus rises from the dead! Death loses, Jesus wins! Life everlasting now waits for all who believe—that’s the Gospel. That’s the Good News we believe and proclaim—the resurrection of Jesus, and through Jesus the promise of resurrection for all who believe, including you, there’s your headline.

And here’s the rest of the story, you may have missed. If death loses, life matters. If death loses and Jesus wins, then life matters, life today is not in vain, life today is not empty or meaningless or without purpose, life today really does matter too. If all we had to look forward to was nothingness and void, well that would not be very hopeful the day you die and frankly it would be kind of deflating today as well, what would be the point of all your hard work? To what end all your patience and suffering, or anything else? But if death loses and Jesus wins, today’s a whole new ball game. Today matters, in a way in never did before! Everything about us, you see, everything about us is a prelude to eternity. Everything about us, is precious in the eyes of the God who has chosen to save

us. Everything about us every day, is a chance to begin giving God the praise and glory, the kind of praise and glory we now know, we'll be giving Him forever in heaven.

We do not live in vain. We do not hope in vain, or suffer in vain, or believe in vain. We live and hope and believe in Jesus Christ who died and rose again, and that changes things forever. By God's grace, it also changes a few things today. May it be so for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ AMEN.