**CHRIST THE KING LVTHERAN CHVRCH**

2353 Rice Boulevard, Houston, TX 77005-2696   ctk@ctkelc.org   [ctkelc.org](http://ctkelc.org/)

713-523-2864 Telephone
**THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

**EASTER SUNDAY**

## 11:00 a.m. April 9, 2023

[*Acts 10:34-43*](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2023-4-9/0)*;* [*Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24*](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2023-4-9/0)*;* [*Colossians 3:1-4*](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2023-4-9/0)*; Saint Matthew 28:1-10*

***In nomine Jesu!***

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

They thought they were successful. Successful in demonstrating their irresistible power. Successful in eliminating Jesus. Successful in crushing any movement to follow Jesus. Successful in humiliating the one Jesus called “Abba” and “my God.” They thought they had successfully established that their power –- power to control, compel, coerce, crush, and kill --- was the only real, effective power.

That’s why they used the cross. Not just to kill, but to humiliate. Not just to render judgment, but to debase and shame. When Jesus breathed his final breath; when Jesus’ lifeless body was hastily laid to rest in a borrowed tomb; when the stone was rolled to block entrance to – and exit from – that tomb, they thought they were successful.

But they weren’t absolutely certain. That’s the way it always is with coercive power; you can never be confident that you’ve used enough. So they sealed the tomb and, still not yet sure, they posted armed guards with the same power to coerce and kill. Using the cross, burying the body, sealing the stone, posting a guard, they felt assured that order had been kept, that their power was intact; that their position was assured and that, as far as Jesus and Jesus’ teachings, and Jesus’ followers and Jesus’ God was concerned, they had spoken the final and definitive word. The power to guilt, shame, punish, coerce, and kill was ultimate; and those who used that kind of punishment-wielding, death-dealing potency were invincible.

But God raised Jesus from the dead!

So much for guilt. So much for shame. So much for death being the ultimate power. And so much for thinking and acting on the notion that might makes

 right; and that the only way to maintain order and assure one’s position is to instill and regularly utilize fear.

God raised Jesus from the dead; and the first words of Christ’s resurrection, the first words of the angel, the first words of the risen Christ, and God’s first and final words to each and all of us are “Do not be afraid!”

As my favorite Easter hymn puts it, “Now hell, its prince the devil, of all their powers are shorn;” which means that everyone who uses guilt, shame, threats, and fear is also “of all their powers … shorn.”

God raised Jesus from the dead! Do not be afraid! Do not even *think* *about* using guilt, shame, threats, or fear to keep order or assure your position because in the risen Christ God’s order has been maintained and our position as those beloved by God is assured.

But here’s the thing. Now more than ever, we are surrounded and bombarded by all sorts of people using guilt and shame, and threats and fear to assure their privileged position and keep us and everyone else under control. They have a list of every*thing* to be afraid of -- from books to vaccines to the rule of law. They have a list of every*one* to be afraid of – they have well-honed naming and shaming skills and well-practiced expertise in guilting and blaming all sorts of people for problems, real or imagined, that we face. They do not read, or else dismiss the words we hear that “God shows no partiality. “Be afraid,” they shout, be very afraid!” Sadly, many do all of this in the name of the one whose first words after being raised from death was “do not be afraid.” Sadly, we are tempted to use the same tactics too.

To that, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred by the Nazis for his fearless faithfulness 78 years ago today, reminds us, “The world is not overcome through destruction, but through reconciliation. Not ideals, nor programs, nor conscience, nor duty nor responsibility, nor virtue, but only God’s perfect love can encounter reality and overcome it. Nor is it some universal idea of love, but rather the love of God in Jesus Christ, genuinely lived, that does this.”

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Do not be afraid! “God shows no partiality!” Do not be afraid! These are not merely words of hope. They define Christ’s way of life. Fearless, shame-free, guilt-free, impervious-to-threat life. That’s what is meant by the apostle’s call to “seek the things that are above;” and not use guilt, shame, threats, fear, or death to control others. Trust the God who raised Jesus from death and thus made coercive power both power-less and use-less!

Christ is risen! And the world, God’s creation, Christ’s Church, this nation, this state, our children, and every shamed, named, blamed marginalized and stigmatized person needs faithful, fearless people to use God’s power – the power of serving love – to make life on earth as it is in heaven. That’s our unique calling, consistent with, but different from our forebears’, which is needed today because *this* day we celebrate that the power to guilt, shame, punish, coerce, and kill has had its day. This is the day the Lord has made! This is the time for us to listen to, and live by the risen Christ’s first words “Do not be afraid!” so that for all the fear-filled people of the world, these may be Christ’s last and best words too.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Amandus J. Derr

Interim Senior Pastor