

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

7 April 2019

Isaiah 43:16–21

Philippians 3:(4b–7) 8–14

Luke 20:9–20

God's Beloved Son Has Redeemed Us

Our life and works apart from Christ, no matter how they may glitter to the eyes of the world, are ultimately rubbish and have no righteousness. Rather, in the scandalous cross of Jesus, we find our righteousness alone “*through faith in Christ*” (Phil. 3:9). By such faith, we “*know him and the power of his resurrection*” (Phil. 3:10). For the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt has done a “*new thing*” for us in Christ Jesus (Is. 43:19). He has sent His beloved Son into His vineyard to be killed by sinful men and to become “*the stone that the builders rejected.*” Yet, the One rejected by men “*has become the cornerstone*” of His Church (Luke 20:17). Through the waters of Holy Baptism, He provides us daily refreshment in our earthly pilgrimage, “*a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert*” (Is. 43:19).

PALM SUNDAY / SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

14 April 2019

John 12:12–19 (Palm Sunday Procession)

Deuteronomy 32:36–39

Philippians 2:5–11

Luke 22:1—23:56 *or* Luke 23:1–56 *or* John 12:20–43

The Cross and Passion of Our Lord Are the Hour of His Glory

The King of Israel comes into His royal glory by the path of humble obedience “*to the point of death, even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:8). He “*goes as it has been determined*” (Luke 22:22), according to the Scriptures, willingly submitting to His Father’s plan for the salvation of sinners. “*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name*” (Phil. 2:9). His suffering and death open the way of repentance for the forgiveness of sins because He goes to the cross bearing the sins of the world. In His resurrection, God the Father vindicates His people and has compassion on His servants (Deut. 32:36). He kills to make alive; He wounds in order to heal. In remembrance of Him, we praise God, confessing “*that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:11).

HOLY (MAUNDY) THURSDAY

18 April 2019

Jeremiah 31:31–34 *or* Exodus 12:1–14
Hebrews 10:15–25 *or* 1 Corinthians 11:23–32
Luke 22:7–20 *or* John 13:1–17, 31b–35

Let Us Love One Another, as Christ Jesus Has Loved Us

By Holy Baptism, “*with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Heb. 10:22), we enter the holy place with Jesus. For Jesus is our Passover Lamb who has been sacrificed for us. He reclines at table with us and feeds us with His own flesh and blood: “*the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain*” (Heb. 10:20). In Christ, the Lord remembers us in mercy and remembers our sin no more; He forgives us all our iniquity (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17). With such love, He “*loved his own who were in the world,*” and He even loves us “*to the end*” (John 13:1). As He washes us and feeds us in love, let us love one another, just as He has loved us (John 13:34).

GOOD FRIDAY

19 April 2019

Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9
John 18:1—19:42 *or* John 19:17–30

Behold the Lamb of God, Who Takes Away the Sin of the World

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is led to the slaughter of His cross as the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. “*Despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*” (Is. 53:3), He is the righteous Servant who justifies many by His innocent suffering and death. He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows; He is wounded for our transgressions; He is crushed for our iniquities; He suffers our chastisement, so that “*with his wounds we are healed*” (Is. 53:4–5). As the Son of God, He fulfills the Law for us in human flesh, and so fulfills the Scriptures (John 19:7, 24). In perfect faith and faithfulness, He shares all our weaknesses and temptations, “*yet without sin*” (Heb. 4:15), and as our merciful High Priest, He brings us to the Father in peace.

EASTER SUNRISE

21 April 2019

Job 19:23–27

1 Corinthians 15:51–57

John 20:1–18

Our Redeemer Lives!

In Adam, all die because all sin. The children of that first gardener have been driven out of Paradise and return to the dust whence they were taken. But now another Gardener has come, who has made His bed in the dust of the earth, and in His resurrection He has opened paradise for all the children of Adam. For “*death is swallowed up in victory*” (1 Cor. 15:54), and God “*gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 15:57). So we each confess that “*my Redeemer lives*” and “*in my flesh I shall see God*” (Job 19:25, 26). As He has called us out of darkness into light and wiped away our tears, we behold Him now by faith and recognize His voice in the Gospel. We enter His tomb by the death of Holy Baptism, and we also share His resurrection. For as surely as He has risen, so we also one day “*must rise from the dead*” (John 20:9).

EASTER DAY

21 April 2019

Isaiah 65:17–25

1 Corinthians 15:19–26

Luke 24:1–12

Christ’s Resurrection Is the Firstfruits of the New Creation

The Lord has promised to “*create new heavens and a new earth*” (Is. 65:17), in which His people shall abide in peace and joy. That new creation has begun in the bodily resurrection of Christ Jesus. All the baptized belong to that new creation. Reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, they are “*the offspring of the blessed of the LORD*” (Is. 65:23). The Lord rejoices and is glad in them; He hears and answers their prayers. For “*if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied*” (1 Cor. 15:19). But Christ Jesus has been raised, “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Cor. 15:20). We may be “*perplexed about this*” (Luke 24:4), perhaps even frightened and brought to our knees, because it seems like an “*idle tale*” (Luke 24:11). But faith clings to the Word of Christ and finds His resurrected body — not in the tomb, but in His Holy Supper.

EASTER EVENING / MONDAY

21 or 22 April 2019

Exodus 15:1–18 *or* Daniel 12:1c–3

Acts 10:34–43 *or* 1 Corinthians 5:6b–8

Luke 24:13–35 (36–49)

The Passover Lamb Is Known in the Breaking of the Bread

The celebration of Easter is a never-ending feast because “*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*” (1 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, let us “*sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously*” (Ex. 15:1). He is our strength and our song because He has become our salvation. “*They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day*” (Acts 10:39–40). His chosen witnesses, “*who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead*” (Acts 10:41), now preach “*forgiveness of sins through his name*” (Acts 10:43). By this preaching, Jesus draws near and leads us home. He opens the Scriptures to us, and He opens our minds to understand “*the things concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). He opens our eyes to recognize His wounds and to know Him “*in the breaking of the bread*” (Luke 24:35). He pours out the Spirit of His Father upon us, so that we shall be delivered and finally awakened from the dust of the earth “*to everlasting life*” (Dan. 12:2).

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

28 April 2019

Acts 5:12–20 (21–32)

Revelation 1:4–18

John 20:19–31

That You May Believe and Have Life in His Name

On the Lord’s Day, St. John the apostle was given a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. He is the Living One, “*the firstborn of the dead*” (Rev. 1:5). He died for all people, and behold, He is alive forevermore! Therefore, He has “*the keys of Death and Hades*” (Rev. 1:18). For His death atoned for sin and conquered death, and in His resurrection He opened the kingdom of heaven to us. The “*sharp two-edged sword*” of His mouth (Rev. 1:16) calls you to “*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,*” that by such faith “*you may have life in his name*” (John 20:31). To that end, He sends His ministers of the Word, as the Father sent Him, “*to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 5:31).