

“Thrilling . . . Utterly Thrilling”

Easter Sermon 2019

Texts: Luke 24:1-9; Psalm 2:1-3 with Micah 5:1 and Psalm 2:6-9a with Micah 5:2

Praise God our king is risen! Here’s the scripture which we are going to take into consideration this morning, Amos 3:7:

**For the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.**

From the Old Testament days of Abraham (Gen, 18:17: **The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”** which implies that he shouldn’t and wouldn’t!) to the farewell discourses of Jesus, (John 15:15: **I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father.** Christian Standard Bible), a standard of *divine transparency* is upheld. And with the Spirit’s help, any sincere believer can discover God’s revealed will in the Word. And that is thrilling, completely and utterly thrilling!

So, here’s the plan for this message. We are going to begin with the prophetic word, indeed, we already have. Psalm 2 dating from 940 years BC and the prophet Micah dating from 740 BC, two centuries later, elements of the trial of Jesus, markers as it were, are set in place establishing that 1. we know that Jesus’ trial conforms to the plan and purposes of God; and 2. he who is on trial is the Son of God, a Prince—indeed our King—and a ruler in Israel. Indeed, Jesus, the judge of all, endures judgment at the hands of unrighteous man that he might be put to death, as foretold, and die the death due our sins on the Roman cross. After we have explored the prophetic origins of our understanding of God’s intervention, we will proceed to the trial—first a summary of the trial and then, as a second part, we will walk through the trial process from arrest to the delivery over for execution. Then, after prophecy and after reviewing the trial, we will come to the vindication of all that went before in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We will finish on the evening of the first day of the resurrection when Jesus appears in the midst the disciples, confirming the reality of all the reports in person and committing the ministry of forgiveness to them along with the Holy Spirit.

The Prophecies

**For the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.**

In chronological order, moving from the promise to Abraham (ca 2166 BC), to the time of the psalms (940 BC), and on to the days of Micah (740 BC)—the ministry of Amos predates Micah by a mere twenty years (760 BC). Both Amos and Micah are known as pre-exilic, minor prophets. Amos brought the word of God to the northern kingdom of Israel, and Micah did the same for the southern kingdom of Judah.

To the prophetically savvy there were fewer surprises here—right down to the details of the trial. For instance, Micah 5:1-2:

**1”Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops;
They have laid siege against us;
With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.**

**2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.”**

Micah 5:2 is an oft-cited Christmas nativity verse! It is the verse cited to King Herod, by Jewish scholars, at the time of *the visitation of the magi* who came to Jerusalem from the east, seeking the one **born to be king** of the Jews **whose star they had observed in the east**. King Herod, acting on this intelligence, sent out troops to slaughter all male children from 2 1/2 years and under—in an effort to eliminate the child **born to be king**! The verse tells us much more than location! It also informs us as to the destiny of this child, the King, **born to be ruler in Israel**. (v. 2c) When it speaks of his origins from the days of eternity—his going forth from long ago, the eternity factor of *his divinity* is thereby established *prophetically*. This is nearly 740 years before the Lord’s birth in Bethlehem! That is a lot of accurate detail to have supplied so early—so the Advent of the Christ was no “surprise” except, of course, when it transpired in real time.

But, there is even more for us in Micah 5:1. There is the “state of siege,” reminiscent of the conflict in Psalm 2:2 **The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed . . .** Micah’s image also fits the militant opposition to Jesus in Jerusalem during the last week of his life, known as Passion Week, which we also know as Holy Week, or even more narrowly as Easter Week a weekend which which culminates with Jesus’ resurrection!

What we refer to as the deep state has its apparent precedent in the shadow government of Jerusalem under Roman occupation. The investigation of Jesus’ ministry preceded by years the interrogation of Jesus which then issued in the trial of Jesus. The result of that whole process was the “elimination” of Jesus by Roman style execution. Death by crucifixion was reserved for criminals, tried and convicted in Roman courts. When the Jews had the Prince of life executed, Satan exulted in his great, but very short lived victory. But this analysis is on the large scale, or macro-level.

There is prophetic conformity in Micah 5:1b with this significant detail: **With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek**. This probably corresponds to John 18:22: **When he had said these things, one of the officers, standing by struck Jesus with his hand**. John 18:22 has a margin note, a variant, that reads, **and struck him with a rod**.¹

¹There is some distance between a *slap on the cheek* rendered **struck him with his hand** and enduring a **smite on the cheek with a rod**. How is it possible to bridge this gap? Let me illustrate what happens fairly often in translation across time and several languages. ***The slippage occurred between classical Greek and koine Greek!*** *Because the veracity of biblical prophecy is at stake*, I want to state upfront that **struck with a rod** is the preferred

This change of language, duly noted, is what the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy hinges on. The blow was unwarranted in the trial. And, it is plainly delivered in an extra-judicial setting in the pre-trial inquest. Not only was it unwarranted, it was *illegal*. Smiting with a rod should follow conviction, not precede it. Jesus had not shown insolence to the high priest—indeed Annas, his questioner, was not even the high priest at the time of the incident! Annas' son-in-law was currently the high priest. His name was Caiaphas. Besides the Jewish court/Council was not yet in session having been convened secretly under the cover of darkness! Conclusion? Jesus is the judge smitten with a rod in the prophecy as well as **the ruler in Israel** (Micah 5:2c) as well as the King installed by God **on his holy hill** (Psalm 2:6), that is, in Jerusalem, and the crowd when they cried out, **Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord** (Luke 19:38) both knew what they were proclaiming and addressed their praise to Jesus himself. All as prophesied.

But in the eyes of the resistant Jews, Jesus, a blaspheming fraud, was guilty and the “court²” was looking for a crime to hang on him so as to hang him on the cross.

The Trial: Part One, summary

Having just put on “The Tempest” by William Shakespeare, I find myself uniquely placed to observe this about the “greatest trial” on record in the history of the world occurs in five acts. Act One Jesus has been brought bound, bleeding from the cords binding his wrists, his “cinctures,” from the Garden of Gethsemane, along the road into Jerusalem, through the Sheep's Gate—the road runs through the Kidron valley.³ Jesus is taken by way of the former the high priest's courtyard where of the house of Annas⁴, father-in-law, into the courtyard of Caiaphas. Act One consists of four scenes: scenes 1. and 2. (Matt.26, Mark 14, John 18 and Luke 22) Scene 3. transpires at Annas' house (John 18:12-23) and on we go to scene 4. (same sources) to Caiaphas⁵, the current

language. Consider this, the Greek used here for **smite** has a history: in classical Greek it carries the meaning of with a rod—as in a judicial punishment! But through the translation into later, *koine Greek—by way of the LXX, the septuagint version predominant in Jesus' day!*—this word slipped into a *slap with the hand*. In contrast the source in Micah 5:1c is: **With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.** In our bibles John 18:22 is translated, with the same Greek word: struck Jesus with his hand—the margin note notwithstanding.

The force of Micah's wording is supported in John 18:23 by Jesus' follow-up question: **Why do you strike me using another Greek word for striking a person** (Gk: *depreis*— meaning “flay me”)? *Depreis* (John 18:23) is a stronger word, more in keeping with Micah; namely, ***rapisma—from rapis***: “meaning strike with a staff”). The margin note may originate with this discrepancy of force in the Greek verbs used—and disparity of object, a rod versus one's hand. Given that Jesus is **the judge of Israel**, and the abuse prophesied by Micah, **the rod on the cheek** is to be preferred—Jesus being so struck is identified as **judge of Israel** and therefore as the proper referent of the prophetic word!

² This clandestine session was quickly called, informal and illicit—a caricature of “justice.”

³ Matt. 26; Mark 14, Luke 22 and John 18.

⁴ John 18:12-23.

⁵ Matt.26; Luke 22 and Mark 14.

high priest, c. AD 18-36. In Caiaphas' courtyard where Jesus is roughly interrogated a second time. If it were not the middle of the night, the road might have been crowded with people. However, the sheep were already penned for the obligatory priestly inspection period before the Passover sacrifices. This route up the Kidron Valley is particularly apt because the temple discharge of blood and offal, signifying the Passover sacrifices, would soon stain its stream darkly. Act Two takes place in Jerusalem where Jesus is marched to the hall of Pilate⁶—actually the governor's palace—which the Jews would not enter for fear of defilement by the Gentile governor. Act Three unfolds at Herod's palace because the Herod Agrippa, the regent over Galilee, **happened to be in town that weekend**. (Luke 23:7) Jesus neither pleads for mercy, nor answers any questions, nor performs any signs for King Herod. Act Four we relocate to the stone "Pavement" (in Hebrew *Gabatha*), outside the governor's palace⁷, the *Praetorium*, where the Gentile governor could hold conversation with the ritually cleansed Jews. The stones were no doubt stained with some drops of the Savior's blood for his arms were cruelly cinched and cut the flesh. Additionally, Jesus had been stricken, beaten and bruised by now. Act Five finds us back at the *Praetorium*⁸, where after Jesus, condemned to death is further abused by the Roman soldiers, now *inside the Praetorium*, soldiers whom the Jewish leaders **bribed** to degrade and mock Jesus as "The King of the Jews." Then Jesus is presented to the mob and led away to be crucified under a sign, "King of the Jews." Pilate wrote it for all the world to see—writing truer than he thought and truer than he even believed⁹.

The Trial: Part Two, a walk through the trial

Let us walk through the action together marking Jesus' heroic sufferingly injustice. *Act One, Scene 1*, Jesus is beset by soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane—they are the temple guard and Judas has led them to that place so that Jesus can be apprehended apart from the crowd. They are armed and after a brief skirmish, Jesus secures the freedom of his followers by submitting to arrest. There is no question that Jesus might have summoned warring angels and either destroyed his adversaries, or sent them scurrying back, terrified and maddened to their handlers, the hostile, murderous Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. *Act One, Scene 2* Jesus is jostled along the road into the city through the Sheep's Gate into Jerusalem. How ironic that the

⁶ Mark 15; Luke 23 and John 28-19:16.

⁷ Luke 23:12-25; Matt. 27:15-26

⁸ Matt. 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19 and John 19:1-3

⁹ Later, the Jewish leaders would object when this title was inscribed and placed on Jesus' cross. They would have preferred it to read, "He said he was king of the Jews." But, to their chagrin, the truth prevailed, and their king was nailed to the cross. There were several "buy-off's" recorded around the trial passion week of Christ: the 'bought' witnesses, the hireling Romans. Witness tampering didn't stop with Jesus' execution. Even the guard stationed at Christ's tomb was paid to lie about the resurrection! Before passing on, note how apt the action of *this great trial is to the fulfillment of Psalm 2:2: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed."* The kings, Pilate represent the emperor, and King Herod included, were joined in the plot against Jesus' life by the Sanhedrin, the rulers of the people, including the high priests, both Anna, and Caiaphas. Note how they **took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed**. *They were devilish, deceitful, devious and dishonest, but practical and realists.*

Lamb of God should be brought by the very road on which the sheep and lambs were brought for Passover! And bound, as Isaac had been bound by Abraham (in that greatest test of his faith), as if preparatory to sacrifice on some strange altar of hostile, Jewish or pagan unbelief. Isaac was spared, but not God's own Son.

Act One, Scene 3 John 18 records the exchange at Annas' house—which is where Peter first denies Jesus, to the doorkeeper, a maiden. Annas probes in two areas: first about his disciples, his following, and second about his teachings. We know that sedition is what the Jews want to charge Jesus with, and we know that insurrectionists like Barabbas were current threats to peace and a Roman security risk. Jesus wisely refers Annas to the public record because his audiences are familiar with his teaching—and so was the disingenuous Annas. *They had embedded spies everywhere!* This was “show and pretense.” He had already decided that Jesus was not the Messiah, a guilty fraud and a deceiver—if not an outright blasphemer. That last would carry with the Jewish authorities, *if they could legitimately verify it. They could not..* The account continues to relate the second and third denials of Jesus by Peter—the crowing of the cock (mid-predawn for Palestinian roosters). And the prisoner is remanded to Caiaphas (where Act One, scene 4 unfolds). *All of these proceedings are under cover of night (something forbidden in the Law) marking it forever as a thing of vile darkness, treachery, villainy and betrayal . . . a worse, Deicide.*

In Act One, Scene 4, in Caiaphas' courtyard, the mockery and abuse of Jesus intensifies. He was struck but once in the previous scene, unjustly, under the pretense of insulting the high priest—despite Annas being “out of office.” Jesus knew who he was and he knew he had not insulted the man. Jesus is blindfolded and buffeted by fellows who demanded that he prophesy who had struck him! They blasphemed him furiously and frequently, mocking his messiahship. They acted foolishly, presuming to put Christ on trial and will answer for that surely, if they have not repented already. For we who know the truth about Jesus are aware that he is returning as the Judge of the quick and the dead. Everything said, thought and imagined against Christ, his cause and his church shall be openly exposed—which demolishes the idea of secret or private sin. ***All secrecy will be abolished in that day.*** All injuries to Christ, or to his people will be recompensed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Judge will be in charge of the session and every superintended self will be summoned. In a sense the trial begins most clearly in Caiaphas' courtyard: false witnesses are sought *and they prove very hard to come by*. Finally, two more or less agree on a deliberately misconstrued declaration of the Lord; they claimed that he spoke against the Temple when he said ***Destroy this temple***—but Jesus was referring to his own body!—***and in three days***, with or without hands, I will ***rebuild it in three days***. Jesus was describing his own resurrection and was not talking about destroying the physical plant of the temple at all! However, *and this is the crux of that matter, saying such a thing was not a capital offense* and neither of the paid accusers' versions was either accurate or correct. *Jesus could only be charged by deliberate mis-construal!*

So came the question of the hour: ***Are you the Christ, the Son of God?*** This saying could only be blasphemy if it were untrue. It was true. Mark 14:62 and Matt. 26:64 completely agree on this point. ***It is an undeniable affirmation of Jesus' godhead, divine origin and essential unity with the Father.*** If this were not true Jesus' death would simply be another human casualty. His sacrifice could not avail for our

forgiveness and we would be utterly lost and without hope in this world. Full, intimate, first-hand and complete knowledge of God was Christ's sole possession!

To be sure Caiaphas may be sincere in his unbelief. But he is wrong. And so is the kangaroo court listening in. Now the reviling, spitting and abuse kick into high gear.¹⁰ Seating Jesus in a chair, they reprise the blindfold prophesy game with increasing brutality. *What's sincerely held may be gravely mistaken.* There is a striking contemporaneity to this question: do we cheerfully acknowledge both his Godhead and his Messiahship? Either we do, or we don't; there is no third option. Jesus declares it to be so. Is that enough? That means that Jesus is the Christ, the upholder of all things; he is the One in whom all things cohere. He is God made flesh who dwelt among us—then was despised, scourged, mocked, treated basely, brutalized and crucified *for the love of his enemies!*

What hatred! Stunningly negative animus, irrational spite and viciousness. This may be one basic appeal of public stoning, or lynchings—a complex matter—although I do not approve of mob actions! Savagery provoked may always become savagery awakened.

The **god-ness** of these assertions about Jesus' callings certainly undergirds their truth. Next to consider as a testimony to truth is, the conversion of faithless, hopeless, wretched peoples. The positive effects of the gospel preaching. If the savagery of our unredeemed natures is nullified by the blood of Christ, the work of the cross and the power of the resurrection—*what more divine results* do we hope to see? Do we have some better prophet in mind? Some better Savior? Some folk obviously do and thence come cults, religious divisions and schisms and this desire brings out false teachers, media mobsters, the envious, evil doers. There is simply no Savior better than Jesus. However, If you do not believe in Him, are not saved by Him, cannot trust in Him . . . you must be numbered among the smiters and despisers.

Act Two relocates the trial's action at the *Pavement*, before the governor's hall and we encounter Pilate. The Jews have no legal authority to kill Jesus for blasphemy, so they bring up secular (or pagan) charges: namely *sedition*. Jesus is not seditious, he did not counsel violent overthrow of the Romans (for which zealous Jews hated him) and he encouraged the payment of taxes. *So substitutionary charges must be discovered!* If they cannot find them, they are duty bound to invent them. His kingdom is not of this world anyway. Jesus' answer confuses Pilate. **To bear witness to the truth?** is hardly a Roman concept—in Rome all was bought and paid for; the Romans were worldly realists. Pilate is a political hack, and a scoffer on matters of truth and that is actually why justice is a cheap commodity in his provence. Pilate is also a coward. He gladly defers judgment to King Herod Agrippa, **that old fox.**

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Act Three is very short.

Luke 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign, performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before, they had been enemies with each other.

That's it. If Herod were entitled to execute, it is not sure why he did not do so—unless he also found no fault in him—as reported. He sought some miraculous proof of divinity. Jesus' handlers were very present—they would not let Jesus get away as guiltless, or to escape. Remember this king later kills James to **please the Jews** and would have also done so to Peter such was the popular lust for blood, evidently the day's best entertainment.

Act Four has us back at the *Pavement* for round two with Pilate:

13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. 15 No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. 16 Therefore I will punish Him and release Him." (Omitted in some translations.).17. Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the festival.¹¹

Luke 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" 19 He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.¹² 20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, 21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" 22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him." 23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail. 24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. 25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

¹¹This does not satisfy the bought crowd, acting in a bloodthirsty frenzy. Of course not, the envious would murder Jesus. *This is so diabolical!* Those who feared, envied and loathed Jesus the most, were determined to destroy him.

¹² Imagine preferring a schoolhouse shooter, a church or synagogue assassin to Jesus. That would be comparable!

Act Five brings closure, the denouement:

Matt. 27:24 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." 25 And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" 26 Then he released Barabbas or them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. 28 They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a (staff) reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

And now, the Resurrection

We turn at last to the point of it all. We step past the gruesome details of Jesus' tortured death on the cross by which he died the death we deserved in order to atone for the sins of all. His blood was shed to may payment on the debt we could not pay- so offensive was our rebellion and rejection of our just, loving and holy heavenly Father. In a sense, all of us had run away from home—away from the arms, companionship and love of God. We did not live the best, and we squandered ourselves, our lives, our resources, our manifest and manifold blessings. And we were so hopeless of working our way back to God that God, as he had planned from before the foundations of the earth; as he had determined and purposed to do from before time, sent his Son to seek and find and save us. His reception was far from royal, even far from fair. He was suspected, mocked, reviled and slaughtered. Yet for all that he never abandoned his love for us and opened his arms towards all who would come to him. If you are one of those who has yet to come to him, yet to be reconciled with God the Father, I plead with you to make this the day. If you are moved to come, he will not refuse you! Your acceptance precedes your choice to come. Do so.

Luke 23:54 It was the preparation day for the Sabbath, and the Sabbath was about to dawn. 55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb¹³, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5 and as the

¹³ This was a surprise, for they wondered **Who will roll away the stone for us?** Mark 16:3

women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 He is not here, but He has risen¹⁴,. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” 8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 But these words appeared, in their sight, to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings only—by themselves; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

In another gospel, it is recorded that Peter and John made this fact-checking visit to the sepulcher. (John 20:1-10) And in that account it is Mary Magdalene who ventured forth first that Easter morning—the lack of corroboration makes the skepticism of the disciples more credible. But what lies beyond dispute, from both traditions, is that something unanticipated, totally surprising—a game changing upending of the whole world(!)—had occurred on Resurrection morning.

The tomb was open, and it was empty. Mary’s explanation: **They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.** (v.2) That first person plural **we** harmonizes John’s account with Luke’s. John has himself there in his account as a witness and the additional details about the linen clothes substantiates the fact of his presence with Peter. Apparently all parties to the discovery of the empty tomb went in, looked around and took note of the details. We learn that **John upon entering saw and believed**—that he saw the evidence of the resurrection and believed despite not yet fully understanding the **Scripture that he must rise from the dead**¹⁵. Unless we understand the disciples **homes** to be their guest *places of residence* in the city, some of the details about their location in Jerusalem could get confusing—it is pretty certain that they didn’t go back 85 miles to Galilee at this point in time. It is fairly certain they had a meeting place in town, possibly in the home that housed the upper room, a Jerusalem residence.

So the two disciples upon hearing the report of Mary (initially alone, or in the company of other sisters involved in the ministry) made a trip to the tomb and Mary followed them there a second time. And they are in a state of perplexity, of great puzzlement. This is the moment when two angles appear **sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”** It seems that she still believes that Jesus is dead and that his body is lying around somewhere. The last thing she expected was to see Jesus alive, and standing before her. Jesus repeats the question of the angels, **Woman, why are you weeping** and then adds, **Whom are you seeking? But there**

¹⁴ or, **has been raised**, an alternate translation of the same words.

¹⁵ (i.e. Psalm 16:10 along with Isaiah 53:10-12 and Hosea 6:2)

*Jesus was, incognito.*¹⁶ **Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”** Jesus is still dead to her until he calls here by name, “Mary.” She turns, **exclaims** *Rabboni*, and, by inference, grabs ahold of him, clinging to him!

You know, realism cannot get much more flat-footed than this! *Jesus, risen from the dead, embraceable and real as life.* It must have been thrilling, absolutely thrilling. Here was her Lord dead, but now alive again. **Go and tell my brothers, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples—a woman did this, mind you, when angels were more than available!—“I have seen the Lord”** He’s alive and **that he had said these things to her.** And, we know, bless their souls they received this news with reservations.

However, that evening, that Sunday, he re-appears **in the midst of the disciples, behind closed doors, and says ‘Peace be with you.’** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. **Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.** Jesus said to them again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so send I you.”** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

Brothers and sisters, we have this ministry of reconciliation—let us receive the Holy Spirit and be about it. Some there are that need forgiveness, others who need to forgive. Some have no example, such as Jesus supplies, on how to suffer graciously under injustice. Some need to be introduced to Jesus as your friend. Forgiving others is very hard to do—very challenging but if we do we are freed from personal revenge, resentment and bitterness. Freedom from these restricting emotions is wonderful. That is our ambassadorship . . . let’s do it.

Amen

¹⁶ Given her state of mind, Mary was not consciously seeking anyone! She came for the body!