

April 5, 2026
Resurrection Sunday

“He is Not Here”

Colossians 3:1-4

Our reading from the Gospel According to St. Matthew today is the most spectacular account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only this Gospel relates the earthquake, the blazing angel descending and the guards falling catatonic. The other three tellings simply have the women showing up and finding the stone rolled away from the tomb entrance.

What is common to all four tellings is that Jesus is not in the tomb. It's not that the angel rolled away the stone and let Jesus out or anything like that. The revelation in all four Gospel is simply that there is nothing there. He has risen. Yet what all of these tellings also have in common is that the women and also some of the disciples all look inside the tomb to confirm it's empty.

In the first three gospels the angel informs the women Jesus has risen. They then tell the disciples and some come to the tomb and guess what? It's still empty. But you know what does not happen in these Gospels? Nobody spends the day hanging out in the empty tomb where Jesus once was. He is not there. He has risen. Even Thomas, who totally disbelieves the resurrection for a week, knows it's pointless to hang out in the tomb because there is nothing there to be had.

I make this point because of what St. Paul wrote in our Epistle reading from Colossians 3: *“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”*

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead to perfect life in divine glory forevermore. He is the guarantee and the firstfruits of this eternal life for all who call on His name in faith and hope. Knowing this, St. Paul's words make perfect sense. Each one of us should continually in faith and hope be looking toward that life where Christ is reigning. We should be looking with anticipation to the coming of Christ again, knowing that even if He come after we're dead, He brings about our resurrection just as His.

“If you have been raised with Christ...” Are you baptized? If so, you stand baptized into Christ's death and resurrection this very day. St. Paul is not at all unclear about that in His letter to the church in Rome. He says there: *“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”* So we live this life in joyful expectation of the next because Christ is risen and has thrown the gates to perfect life wide open for us!

But the sad truth is that so many people fall for the temptation to sit at the tomb, staring into the darkness—they set their minds on things that are on earth.

We're blessed with wonderful things in this life, especially the people God places around us to love. We have our God-given vocations and responsibilities to perform to His glory. We have all the great material blessings God lavishes upon us. We think it's a good life...and in a lot of ways it is...and that's where it gets dangerous.

This is a broken life. You don't have to look far to see that. True, it's also a blessed life, but it's filled with pain and sorrow, injustice and evil, and y'all know it doesn't last. This life decays and dies. So if you're trusting in this life and placing your hope here, it's like staring into the tomb: nothing there. The only thing you will ultimately find is death. Jesus is risen. We are called to look toward Him and the eternal life we have in Him right now AND yet to come! This

life? Well, it's not bad and we should deal with it, but ultimately it is not the main event. In eternity it's only going to be a footnote.

Have you ever been a passenger in a car having a conversation with the driver and he or she is one of those people who can't talk without looking at you? I hate that! You're moving at 50 miles per hour and they're blabbing and looking at you at you and you're mind is screaming, "You don't have to stare at me! Look at the road! You can talk and drive at the same time! Give me a glance once in a while but keep your eyes on the road! I don't want to die!"

Well that driver is me and you on the drive through this life when we take our focus off of the things that are above; off of Jesus who has given us resurrection from the dead! Our privilege is to know Christ and stand saved for eternity by His death and resurrection. When we let the world fill our vision, we are courting disaster. Because we quite easily can get caught up in the empty tomb of the worldly, and it's not only that "He is not here. He has risen." It's that we stop even thinking about Him, seeking Him. We're focused on the stuff that ends and dies, not on He who has no end. We can abandon the critical and blessed truth.

"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

When you trust this truth Paul proclaims in Christ, you can't help but look forward to the day Christ appears. Your mind necessarily turns to Christ. Maybe not every moment of every day; even the most faithful can't pull that off. But we're constantly returning to Him in prayer, repentance and thanksgiving and praise because His is risen, and this means so do you, and we long for that day over and above anything of this life.

This is why it's right and proper to come to His house and formally receive His gifts regularly. I've told the talk-and-look-while driving people to stop looking at me and keep their eyes on the road. Their not good at it, so you have to keep reminding them so they don't crash.

Likewise, we come and hear the wonderful Gospel truth: "He is Risen! He lives and reigns! He loves and forgives! He is here for you and with you in all your struggle here. He is bringing you through it to your own place in His eternal glory!" You don't get that a lot in the world, and you need it very much.

This day marks the completion of the guarantee of your eternal salvation. This truth is more precious than anything else, bar nothing. It's most certainly too valuable to release because you're too caught up in the empty tomb of this world.

Remember the angel's words, *"He is not here, for he has risen, as he said."*

Bring this phrase to mind whenever you love the world too much, or whenever the world hurts too much, whenever it disappoints, frustrates or tempts you. He is here with you and you are baptized into Him, this is true. But He is bringing you through the broken to the glory and life to which He bodily rose all those years ago.

He is not here in the sense He does not dwell in that which is fallen, broken and dying. He has risen to that which is eternal. He dwells in the eternal and by grace alone He dwells in you. Being then eternally His, seek the things that are above, where Christ is. For He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Amen.