

*Sermon for Easter Dawn, 27.iii.200, 6:30 a.m.
Guinston Presbyterian Church / Brogue, Pennsylvania
Isaiah 12:1-6; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18
Brogue Community Easter Sunrise Service*

J. J. !

Apostolic Greeting

Grace to you and peace from God Our Father and from Our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! ✠ Amen.

Focus Text

“... for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

-- Colossians 3:3

Sermon

Thank God that's over!—an odd way to begin any sermon, let alone an Easter sermon to be sure, but please let me explain.

This is only the third time I have preached from a Presbyterian pulpit, the first having been when I was a pastoral intern at Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Baraboo, Wisconsin. It was ‘pulpit exchange Sunday’ and I drew the Presbyterian straw. I explained to my host congregation that, though I had been Baptized in a Presbyterian church at the age of about five weeks, I had not, to the best of my knowledge, been back to that or any other

Presbyterian church until that very day. After the service, at the coffee hour, the Princeton Seminary roommate of the minister who had baptized me those many years ago introduced himself. Decades later I would find my Lutheran self in the pulpit of this church, three years ago this coming Thanksgiving Eve, and here I am again. I know that neither the so-called 'double predestination' of Presbyterianism nor the 'single predestination' of Lutheranism is to be confused with fatalism. But, still, as I stand here, the sense of an inescapable order of things is difficult to dismiss.

I feel a little like the little Scottish Presbyterian boy on his way to school. The little fellow was skipping merrily along when he tripped on a stone firmly imbedded in the path and broke his arm trying to break his fall. His teacher was astonished as he came whistling into class, a little late, with his arm in a makeshift sling. "What made ye so late Teddy?" the school marm asked. "Oh, it's nothin'. I fell and broke me arm is all." "And how is it you're so *cheerful* then?" "Och, well, I just thank God *that's* over!"

There is a certain solace in the thought, that, no matter what happens to us, no matter how dreadful it may be, the Almighty and

All-Merciful God *will* bring some good out of it as we affirm with all Christendom when we call the day fore yesterday ‘*God’s Friday,*’ ‘*Good Friday.*’ But, though little Teddy may not have actually had a broken arm on the way to school in store for him as part of the Lord’s eternal decree, there is a weightier truth to what the little boy in the story said.

There are a number of things Christians *can* say on Easter morning and probably should. At the end of this sermon, I will try to lead you in that rousing Russian Orthodox Easter greeting that has become so popular the Christian world over which begins, ‘Christ is risen!’ ‘*WE WON!*’ was boomed into my face, blasting me out of a more than half slumber in the Easter pre-dawn two years ago in the basement of New Harmony Presbyterian Church by the gentle pastor of that congregation. I can still remember thinking, “Is he talking about the Battle for Falujia or the state lottery?” But my brother in faith and ministry of course meant neither. Bob Edmundson was talking about the victory God has won for us over sin, death and the devil in Jesus Christ. Hence, *WE WON!* Well, here’s one for you and for us all, Bob: “Thank God *that’s* over!”

For, it really *is* 'over,' even if your name is not 'Teddy.' Each and every consequence of the way we quite effectively derailed our whole history and pulled our collective human life away from the love of God at the very beginning of that history is over and *done* with, for our life is now 'hidden with Christ in God,' as Saint Paul wrote to people essentially just like us living at a place called Colossæ some two millennia ago.

It is 'hidden,' not in the sense of being obscured or erased. Our life is 'hidden with Christ in God' in that there is nothing more that can threaten that life. The life we have *already* lost for His sake and the sake of the Gospel is now safe forever. The worst is *over* and the best will be safe forever. What of it that life is too short for some to fully unfold the love and boundless creativity of being created in the image of God? That life is now 'hidden with Christ in God,' and the dance and the song and the joy of life goes, as though there is not only no tomorrow but as though there is *only* eternity, as there will be when time itself has passed away.

We truly don't have to worry about whether God will forgive us, even for *that* sin, whatever it may be, for God already *has* forgiven

that sin. God has covered and hidden that sin in the obedience of Christ.

We truly don't have to worry about the approval or rejection of others, for the Innocent One accepted every slander and calumny for our sake without uttering a word. In Him we have no reputation to defend for we have renounced our good name to be one with the Man of Sorrows. We needn't worry about losing not those things but those *ones* most precious to us, those irreplaceable others in our lives, for the Father has been down that path far ahead of us in losing His own and only Son--and for what?—*for our sake*.

And, finally, neither you nor I nor anyone who has been drowned in the waters of Baptism and who carries the cross of Jesus *with* Jesus need fear that last lost, our own death, for we have already died *in Him*, have we not? And is *that* not already over so that we may look up and ahead, and not down at the road that tripped us up? Indeed it is!

Thanks be to God!

Christ is risen!

He is Risen indeed!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Closing Prayer & Benediction

O God of all grace, You sent Your Son, Our Savior Jesus Christ, to bring life and immortality to light. We give you thanks because by His death Jesus destroyed the power of death and by His Resurrection has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Make us certain that, because He lives, we shall live also, and that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from Your love which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. ✠Amen.

Now may Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God Our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. ✠Amen.

S. D. G. !