

“The Eighth Day” (2024 Easter Sunday)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:19-20)

It was after the sabbath. The first day of the week was dawning. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb, they heard strange news from an angel. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid. I know you’re looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen. Come and look at the place where he lay.”

The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, ran to tell the disciples. On the way, Jesus suddenly appeared to them and said, “Good morning!” The two Marys fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and they will see me there.”

How would you respond if you were one of the disciples who heard of Jesus' resurrection? Matthew reported that some disciples doubted (Matthew 28:17). Mark reported that they didn't believe it (Mark 16:11, 13). Luke reported that the disciples thought the women's words were utter nonsense. (Luke 24:11). John also reported that the disciples were still terrified so that they were meeting together with the doors locked. (John 20:19). All four gospels reported that the disciples had a hard time believing the news of Jesus' resurrection.

Not only Thomas, but all of them were doubting disciples at first. But we know something happened in their lives. They began to change. They became witnesses of the resurrection despite threats of imprisonment, torture and death. These are changes that cannot be explained without the resurrection of Jesus.

For the early Christians, the Easter people, the resurrection day was the first day, not because it was the first day of the week but because it was the day of new creation God made. This completely new day was also called “the eighth day,” which was a day beyond ordinary human experiences or imagination. It was a day of God's redemption and new creation. For early Christians, Sunday, the eighth day, was the day Jesus became lifegiving and ever-rising hope. Since then, “every Sunday has

been a weekly little Easter and every Easter has been a yearly great Sunday.”¹ It is still true even today.

The risen Christ met the disciples in Galilee. The place where the poor, the discriminated against, and the oppressed lived. In that way, Jesus called the disciples to continue his ministry and mission of God’s reign. Jesus told them, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Then teach them to practice all I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The great commission is a hint for us how to become Easter people. How to live out the Easter hope. How to shine forth the brightness of the life-giving light of the risen Christ. Today is the eighth day, the day of new creation. Where Jesus is, there is life. Where the Spirit of God is present, there is life. Jesus is alive in a new and powerful way in which he shares God’s life.

“Jesus said, I am the resurrection and I am life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet shall they live,
and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die...

I died, and behold I am alive for evermore...

Because I live, you shall live also.”

Let us pray:

God of life, live in us today and every day. Help us shine forth with the brightness of Christ’s healing and life-giving light. Amen!

¹ James White, *Intro. to Christian Worship*.