

Mark 16:1-8 & 1 Corinthians 15:15-57 – April 12, 2020 (Easter Sunday)

It's funny how children identify people. Adults, of course, identify people by name. We know their first name. Their last name. Occasionally even their middle name. If I want to refer to this gentleman over here, I say, "Craig." And if that's not specific enough for the situation, I might even say, "Craig Meyer."

Children, however, more often use context to identify people. When my wife would go to pick up our daughter from school, her name to all the other children was, "Mrs. Emi's Mom." It was funny, but it worked. When I was a child talking about my grandmother, I would often refer to her as either "Iowa Gramma" or "New York Gramma." Because that's how I thought of them.

Of course, people – adults included – have been doing this for the entire history of humanity. My last name, "Ketelsen," just means the son of the kettle maker. "Boonville" means the place where Nathan and Daniel Morgan Boone lived.

And Jesus himself is often referred to in these terms. He is spoken of frequently as Jesus of Nazareth. Makes sense. That was his hometown. That's where he grew up. That's where his parents lived. Jesus was a fairly common name in Jewish society. Jesus of Nazareth was far more specific.

But that's not the only name Jesus has. He also gets the title of Jesus the Christ. Christ means "anointed one." Anointed by water and the Spirit in his baptism. Anointed as the promised heir to David's throne. Anointed as a prophet like Moses himself. Anointed as a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

The title of Christ not only distinguished Jesus from all the other people named Jesus. But it described who he was. He was the one sent by God with the office of prophet, priest, and king. And to believe that, to believe he is the Christ promised throughout the entire Old Testament, means that you are a Christian.

Today, in our Gospel Lesson, we get another title for Jesus. I'm not sure it's one we think about. Certainly not one that we use very often. But it is immensely important.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome go to the tomb early Easter morning. The sun is just coming up. They go out of love for Jesus, but also out of doubt and despair. For their Lord is dead. And, as far as they know, still lying in a tomb trapped behind a large stone.

When they arrive, they find the stone rolled back. And when they enter the tomb, they don't find Jesus. No, they find an angel, appearing as a young man, dressed in white. They're afraid, as everyone in all of scripture is when they first see an angel.

But the angel says to them, *"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."*

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. The phrase, "who was crucified" could easily be rendered from the Greek as a title. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One.

He's not just Jesus of Nazareth anymore. He's not just Jesus the Christ anymore. He is Jesus, the Crucified One. That is how the angels of heaven see him. That is how they refer to him. That is his identity.

And from that point forward, for all of scripture, that is his identity. Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, calls him, *"This Jesus, who you crucified."* Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, says, *"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

And maybe most importantly, St John, writing in the Revelation. Who hears all the host of heaven, angels and elders and multitudes too numerous to count, declaring, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain."* He's not just the Lamb anymore. He's the Lamb who was slain. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One. That is his name, his title, his description, his identity for all eternity.

Why does this matter? Well, for two reasons. First and foremost, especially on this Easter morning: You can't rise from the dead if you weren't dead to begin with. And the resurrection matters. A lot.

That's what Paul talks about at length in our Epistle reading. If Jesus wasn't dead, then there is no resurrection. And if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, then our faith is futile. It's pointless. There is no Christian faith whatsoever if Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

Because if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then nothing he ever said had any authority. It was all lie. And not only are we then propagating a lie, but we have absolutely nothing to hope for. Because it was all a sham. A fraud. A deception. We should be pitied, if that's the case.

But it's not. Jesus has been raised from the dead. The Crucified Christ is also the Risen Christ. Both are true and both must be taken together. Because you can't have one without the other.

It's more than that though. Because that's a past reality. It's completely true. Jesus did die. And Jesus did rise from the dead. There was a moment in the past when these things happened.

And yet, it's also a present reality. Jesus is and always will be the Crucified One. He emphasizes that to Thomas a week after his resurrection. He shows Thomas his hands and feet and side. And they all bear the scars of the crucifixion.

The same thing is true for those angels in heaven. The Lamb who was slain isn't just an abstract title. John is very specific when he says that the Lamb is called that because he looks as though he has been slain. He bears the scars of being sacrificed.

Scars are often an identifying attribute. They stand out to us and become something we associate with a specific person. But they're also, in their own way, a symbol of our frailty.

I have a scar, for example. It's a big one that runs down my wrist here. It happened when I was a child. My sisters and I were goofing around and I ended up putting my hand through a window. And when I look at that scar I think, "Huh... if it had been a few inches to the right, I might have cut all the nerve endings in my hand. Or it might have severed a major artery, and I might have bled to death." This scar is a reminder of how fragile my body is. Of how mortal my body is.

So now we have Jesus, who is the Christ, the incarnate Son of the Almighty God. But he is also the Crucified One, bearing the scars of his crucifixion. Bearing the scars of the frail flesh he took on. Bearing the reminders of the mortal life he bore and the mortal death he died... for us.

He is Jesus, the Crucified One, who died in our place. Who exchanged his immortality for our mortality. Who exchanged his righteousness for our sinfulness. Who, as Paul puts it in our Epistle, exchanged his identity as a man of heaven for our identity as men of dust.

Why? So that we might take on his identity. Because that is what we need most of all. You see, Jesus isn't the only one to have an identity based around his characteristics. We all do that. To each other and to ourselves.

We look at our sinful lives and we say, "This is who I am. I am Joshua, the Greedy One. Joshua, the Proud One. Joshua, the Hateful One. Joshua, the Lustful One. Joshua, the Covetous One. Joshua, the Idolatrous One. I am Joshua, the sinner. Doomed to death and hell."

We become trapped in the identity that these sins create. An identity that both fills us with pleasure and fills us with guilt. Because we know this is not who we should be. But this is all we feel we can be.

And then Jesus, the Crucified One, comes to us. And he says, "No. That's not who you are. You are 'Joshua, the Baptized One.' You are the one for whom I died. You are the one for whom I got these scars. And because I rose again - because I defeated sin, death, and the devil, because I have washed you in my blood - you have my identity."

We are not people of dust, condemned by our sins. We are people of heaven, bearing the image of the man of heaven. Bearing the image of our risen Lord. Who has swallowed up death in victory.

And now, because he is the Crucified One. Because he bears those scars for us. We have a future that is more than death. For just as by Baptism we bear the image of the man of heaven, so we will cast off these perishable, mortal bodies and put on the imperishable, immortality of heaven. That is the victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One. But he has risen. He has taken your place. Your identity. And now he gives you his own. The identity of one who lives and reigns for all eternity. The identity of a child of God. Amen.