

Easter Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 25:6-9

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

25:6–8† The eschatological feast prepared by God for the redeemed. (CSB)

25:6 *on this mountain* – The translations that emphasize this phrase by moving it to the beginning of the verse (e.g. KJV, NIV) may mislead us to focus on the place where God is acting rather than on the one who is acting. The actual sequence in the Hebrew is who – all peoples / where - on this mountain / and then what – banquet. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

The place where God dwells and dispenses his grace through his appointed means. On Mount Calvary, God dwelling in Christ, procured grace for us. In our present age Zion’ equivalent is the church, wherein the means of grace are found. Here the Lord will exhibit his victorious reign before his people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Also notice the “*this mountain*” reference. Isaiah contrasts Mount Zion with Mount Moab (v 10). Zion is God’s appointed place to “receive the victory” because he has appointed it so and made it so. He makes the victory plain and accessible in contrast to all other human institutions and powers. He makes it plain so that all might be able to see it and receive it as his gift for them. God locates his promise for all people in the lowly line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the line of David, come to fruition in the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb of Jesus, the Christ. Look only to Zion fulfilled, Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Lord of hosts will make - The Lord will prepare a rich feast for all people. Notice the position of “Yahweh, the Lord” in the Hebrew compared to the ESV translation. In the Hebrew text, God’s name comes first. The text is about what Yahweh is doing for all people. The mountain of Zion is vital because he has chosen it. The victory feast is beyond all expectations because he has prepared it. Yahweh prepares a victory feast of the very best wines and meat, reminding us all that all good things flow from the one who created and redeemed us (Gen 1; Is 43:1–3). One is reminded of Jesus miraculously providing the finest wine at the wedding of Cana or even finer wine at the feast of the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus is the “delivered Lamb” who forgives the sins of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

feast. Associated with a coronation (1Ki 1:25) or wedding (Jdg 14:10); cf. the “wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). (CSB)

At Sinai, a similar feast was held, at which God’s people ate and drank with Him (Ex 24:9–11). Jesus speaks on several occasions about God’s feast for His people (e.g., Mt 8:11; 22:1–14; 25:10). (TLSB)

God’s people eat of this banquet of grace every time they hear the gospel or receive the sacraments. As God’s people read and study the Word, they eat from God’s banquet table and receive nourishment for their souls. (PBC)

rich food. Symbolic of great spiritual blessings (see 55:2). (CSB)

Delicacies. (TLSB)

In the ancient Near East, where starvation was a constant threat, fatty and rich foods were the most desirable. (In Job 21:24, “bones rich in marrow” described a prosperous, satisfied person.) This fine meal fully satisfies the members of God’s household, even amid our earthly sorrow and cares (cf also Ps. 36:8). The parallels to the Lord’s Supper are obvious. This banquet is the end-times meal Jesus promised after instituting the Lord’s Supper, when he will dine with us anew (Mt. 26:29; cf 1 Cor. 11:26) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Healthy and desirable. Descriptive terms refer to the absolute best that money could buy. This will be a feast like no other. (TLSB)

aged wine. The best wine—aged by being left on its dregs (see Jer 48:11; Zep 1:12). (CSB)

Left on its fermented sediment to improve strength and flavor. (TLSB)

Wines that have been left to stand on their lees (Sediment settling during fermentation, especially in wine dregs) have a richer flavor. (Concordia Bible)

The power of the gospel to bless men passes all human comprehension. It fills the heart that receives it with light and joy; makes every nation that obeys it prosperous and happy; it provides all believing families with harmony and blessedness. (Concordia Bible)

The banquet Isaiah described is one of the richest the ancient world could imagine. The language emphasizes that it is the best. The wine ages in order to increase its color and quality. The meat was the best that the ancient world could provide. It was fat and rich. In our day we taught to avoid fat, but in the ancient world fat was highly desired. The banquet is the banquet of God’s grace. The Savior-God – the Lord Almighty – has prepared the best His love could offer: rich compassion, wonderful forgiveness, and every satisfying food for the soul. (PBC)

The entire verse, in the Hebrew, is most poetical and musical song, full of praises for the richness of God’s grace in the spiritual food prepared for His children in the Gospel. (Kretzmann)

full of marrow. Healthy and desirable. Descriptive terms refer to the absolute best that money could buy. This will be a feast like no other. (TLSB)

25:7 covering...veil. Or “covering ... veil,” with which faces were covered in mourning—in any event, the associations are with death. (CSB)

Symbol of death and mourning (cf 2Sm 15:30; Jer 14:3; 2Co 3:12–18). (TLSB)

The pall on a coffin represents the clothing of Christ’s righteousness, given in Holy Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Luther goes one step further and says that it means “death and all its evils.” The work done “on this mountain” to destroy the shroud is a work done by the Lord for all people. Understanding this, the work is clearly the work of Christ on the cross done on Mount Calvary. The feast’s connection to the Lord’s Supper is clear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The veil of ignorance with its attendant sin and wretchedness. The covenant made with Abraham was from the beginning designed to bless all nations; and this design Christ will gloriously accomplish. He will make the light of His gospel shine from mount Zion into every land, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Concordia Bible)

25:8 Quoted in part in 1Co 15:54. (CSB)

swallow up death. Death, the great swallower, will be swallowed up. (CSB)

Now, death “swallows” life. On that day, death itself will die. (TLSB)

He will “swallow up . . . the covering that is cast over all peoples.” Sin casts a “death pall” over the world. All the world’s solutions to the human condition end in despair. (See also Eccl 2:18–25.) “Covering” and “veil” could signify suffering and despair, but it probably is even more futile. It probably means absolute blindness to the things of God (2 Cor 3:12–18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The death referred to here is the second death, as interpreted in 1 Corinthians 15:54, and Revelation 20:14 and 21:4. Another such passage is Hebrews 2:14. (Concordia Journal/January 2000)

The verb is found here in the perfect tense without a conjunction. “Having swallowed up, he..” may be better translation showing the connection in thought to the previous verse and its effects as reflected in what follows. The work is done and the victory is won in the cross. The shroud of death is destroyed on Calvary. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Literally, “for ever.” The swallowing up of death is its abolition in the widest sense. The prophet’s vision extends not only into, but beyond the NT period. He has a view of the final issue of Christ’s redemption in this world and in eternity. (Concordia Bible)

In the kingdom of Christ all believers enjoy such unspeakable blessedness of pardon and peace that words cannot describe God’s goodness; and this will be but an earnest of the perfect redemption of heaven, where God will in the fullest sense of the words swallow up death for ever, and wipe away tears from off all faces. (Concordia Bible)

In Canaanite mythology, the gods destroyed death, but the enemy returned with the changing of the season. Here, the Lord demonstrates His kingly authority by swallowing up death forever. John quotes John 18:13 when he describes the marriage supper of the Lamb which will take place after “the former things have passed away (Rev. 19:9; 21:1-4). (TLSB)

LORD GOD. See 7:7; 28:16; 30:15; 40:10; 49:22; 52:4; 61:11; 65:13. (CSB)

wipe away tears – This is often applied to those who have lost loved ones. However the “tears” are our tears caused by the disgrace and sin committed against God for the Gospel is that despite all this He remains faithful toward us by removing our disgrace by His grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

He will “wipe away tears from all faces” and remove the “reproach of his people.” Yahweh’s concern is for the lives of all people. He not only wipes away the tears (the external sign) of one’s reproach, but he also destroys and eliminates the cause (cf 2 Cor 5:17–21). Israel has borne the public reproach of Yahweh as well. Not only the “nations” have felt the wrath of God, but even Israel, due to her rebellion and sin,

has borne God's chastening hand. To the remnant of Israel, who through it all trusted in the one who could alone save and redeem them, their "reprimand, public discipline" has come to an end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

reproach...will take away. See 54:4. (CSB)

The accusation and the penalty for sin is destroyed. Luther: "Christ destroys death. As a plague consumes the body little by little, so Christ is the pestilence of our death and of our old Adam" (AE 16:197). (TLSB)

God removes his people's disgrace caused by sin and death, as prophesied in Joel 2:19. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

the Lord has spoken – We note how Isaiah punctuates these promises by his familiar exclamation point, "The Lord has spoken."

25:9 Another brief song of praise. (CSB)

Trusting God's promises in life, His people now see them powerfully fulfilled. (TLSB)

we – This signified the church of all ages – the communion of saints – those who enjoy the richest feast and rejoice in the Lord's salvation. His salvation may seem a long time in coming. It did for Israel as she awaited the Messiah. Our lives may be prolonged in suffering. But those who wait for the Lord will not be disappointed.

we have waited. Cf. Ps 22:4–5. (CSB)

It means "wait for, trust in." His salvation may seem a long time in coming. It did for Israel as she awaited the Messiah. Our lives may be prolonged in suffering. But those who wait for the Lord will not be disappointed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

"This is our God." This is who Yahweh, the true God, is. This is who he has always been. We can trust him. We can "entrust" our lives to him. He is the source of forgiveness, life, and salvation, of never-ending joy and peace. TRUST IN HIM! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

be glad and rejoice. Cf. 35:10; 51:11; 66:10. (CSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked

harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

15:1-4 Paul will now show that the word of the cross (1 Cor 1:18–19) is the basis of the resurrection hope (chapter 15). He opens this new topic with a gentle rebuke (15:1–2). There is one more area in which the Corinthians have a lamentable lack of knowledge (cf. 10:1; 12:1; 14:38). This he now intends to remedy. According to reports he has received, some of them had failed to grasp the implications of the Gospel for the Christian’s hope. So he recites in creedal form the “ABCs” of the Gospel—the things he had delivered to them as the vital “mother’s milk” of the faith (15:3–4)—as if they had never heard it before (cf. 3:1–2; Heb 5:12–13). Nevertheless, it was the same Gospel which Paul had preached to them some years earlier and which they had embraced at that time. Furthermore, it was to that same Gospel that they owed their present status as Christians (cf. Rom 11:20), and by that same Gospel that their present and future salvation was being secured (1 Cor 15:2; cf. 1:18). (CC pp. 551-52)

Paul adds that he wishes to make known “in what terms” (15:2) he had preached the Gospel to them. But before doing so, he voices his pastoral concern, saying in effect: “Are you retaining the Gospel? Surely you didn’t receive it in vain?” (15:2). (CC pp 552)

On the road to Damascus the risen Christ had revealed himself to Paul in blazing light from heaven and in a voice calling him to account for his sin (Acts 9:3–5). That personal encounter with Jesus convinced him that the one he had persecuted was the Son of God (Acts 9:20). Of course, the Christian message was by no means entirely new to Paul. After all, he had heard Stephen’s address and witnessed his martyrdom (Acts 7:1–8:1); no doubt Paul had learned other details about the faith from Christians he had interrogated. Later, after his conversion, he would have had the opportunity to flesh out his understanding of the basics when he spent two weeks with Cephas in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18). Paul remained adamant, however, that he had not received the Gospel from any human source (Gal 1:11–24) but through God “revealing his Son in me” (Gal 1:16; cf. Gal 1:12). The reception of Christ Jesus as Lord was central (Col 2:6; cf. 1 Cor 12:3). (CC p. 552)

This Gospel of the living Christ, then, Paul had faithfully transmitted to the Corinthians. What were the main terms of Paul’s Gospel (τίνα λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, 15:2)? Paul summarizes its content in four clauses, each introduced by ὅτι (“that”): “*that* Christ died ... *that* he was buried ... *that* he has been raised ... and *that* he appeared” to many (15:3–8). (CC p. 552)

Among the Gospel’s foremost features was, first of all, Christ’s atoning death according to the Scriptures. That “Christ died for taking away our sins” (15:3) lay at the heart of the Gospel. These five words—six in the Greek original—indeed form one of Scripture’s most succinct Gospel statements (cf. Rom 5:8, “Christ died for us”). Thus, in his great resurrection chapter, Paul begins with the sacrificial death of Christ, which he does not see as an event far removed from the resurrection, but as the first act in the drama of our salvation. Here Paul echoes his earlier statements on the Gospel word of the cross as the power of God (1 Cor 1:17–18). Without the powerful death of Christ, we would still be “in our sins” (Jn 8:24). (CC pp. 552-53)

Christ’s atoning death took place “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). No doubt Isaiah 53, which is cited or echoed frequently in the NT (e.g., Mt 8:17; Acts 8:32–33; 1 Pet 2:22–25), would have been one of the chief texts in Paul’s mind. But numerous other portions of the OT are cited in connection with aspects of the crucifixion narrative (e.g., Psalms 22; 69; Zech 12:10; 13:7). (CC p. 553)

According to all four gospels, the account of Christ’s burial (1 Cor 15:4) underlines the reality of his physical death on the cross. Both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed testify that he “was buried.”

He had truly become a νεκρός (“a dead person, a corpse”) who had to be disposed of in the usual manner. (CC p. 553)

The sequence of aorist tenses (“Christ *died*,” “he *was buried*,” 15:3–4) suddenly gives way to a significant and climactic perfect: “he *has been raised*” (15:4). From among the corpses Christ has been raised “by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6:4 completes the divine passive by naming God as the agent of the action) and continues to live as the risen one “forever and ever” (Rev 1:18). His resurrection took place “on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). Earlier he had told his disciples that he “must” be killed and rise again on the third day (e.g., Mt 16:21), implying that this must happen to fulfill the Father’s will as laid down in the OT Scriptures. The apostles and evangelists found the Messiah’s resurrection foretold specifically in passages such as Ps 16:8–11; 110:1; Is 53:10–12; and far more broadly in other passages. (CC p. 553)

That it would happen on the third day seems to have its roots in Hos 6:2 and Jonah 1:17 (MT. LXX 2:1). What makes the Jonah passage particularly pertinent is that Jesus himself declared that Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish’s belly was a prophecy of the Son of Man’s three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Mt 12:39–40). While there is no NT text which directly cites Hos 6:2 as a prophecy of Christ’s resurrection on the third day, its wording suggests that the early church may also have found here one of the key OT *testimonia*. The prophet expresses the hope of all Israel: “*After two days* he will revive us; *on the third day* he will raise us up, that we may live before him.” (CC p. 554)

In raising his Messiah on the third day, God also raises and bestows life on all those who are in Christ. Baptism into Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:13) is Baptism into his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1–11; Col 2:11–13). (CC p. 554)

15:1 *I would remind you* – gnoρίζω – To make known, reveal. I want you to know. Proud of their knowledge (gnosis, 8:1, 7,10, 11), the Corinthians still need to learn or relearn the basics of the Gospel. (CC p. 549)

Lit, “make known.” He is “recalling it into memory” (Chrys, *NPNF* 1 12:226) because they had learned it before. (TLSB)

received. Paul first preached the Gospel in Corinth c AD 50 (Ac 18:1–18a). (TLSB)

in which you stand – ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐστατέτε – To stand or be in grace. (CC p. 549)

Just as they are saved by the Gospel, they stand firm and live by the Gospel. (TLSB)

15:2 *you are being saved* – σοζεσθε – The passive present tense, denoting continuous action, indicates that the Corinthians are in the process of being saved. Christ’ ministry, death, and resurrection accomplished everything necessary for their salvation. However, their faith is under assault, and Paul must correct and educate them. If they fail to hold to the Gospel, then they would have “believed in vain.” So they are in the process of being saved in the sense that they are being preserved in the faith as God brings them closer to the day of resurrection, when their eschatological Christian hope will be fully realized. (CC pp. 549-50)

Though saved now through faith, the fullness of salvation is still to come in eternity. (TLSB)

if you hold fast. κатеχέτε – You will stand and find salvation only if you cling to the Gospel. (CC p. 550)

the word I preached. The Gospel. (TLSB)

believed in vain. † Not persevering in the Christian faith (cf. Judas Iscariot, who eventually showed that he did not remain a believer). (CSB)

The Corinthians stand by the Gospel, though it is also possible to fall away from it. (TLSB)

15:3–5 Two lines of evidence for the death and resurrection of Christ are given here: (1) the testimony of the OT (e.g., Ps 16:8–11; Isa 53:5–6, 11) and (2) the testimony of eyewitnesses (Ac 1:21–22). Six resurrection appearances are listed here. The Gospels give more. (CSB)

15:3-7 The fourth and final ὅτι (“that”) clause in 1 Cor 15:3–5 supplies the supporting evidence that Christ had really risen (ὄντως ἠγέρθη, Lk 24:34) on the third day. These four clauses state the foundational facts of the Gospel: “that Christ died for taking away our sins ... that he was buried ... that he has been raised ... and that he appeared” (1 Cor 15:3–5) to many witnesses. Luke relates that Jesus “presented himself alive after his suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them [the apostles] over a period of forty days” (Acts 1:3). Thus the church’s faith in Christ’s resurrection rests on eyewitness testimony. (CC p. 554)

OT law stipulated that legal evidence should be corroborated by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut 17:6; 19:15). The resurrection of Christ is so vital a fact for the Christian faith that God supplied an abundance of witnesses. Fittingly, the first eyewitness on Paul’s list is the first of the twelve apostles, Simon Peter or, as Paul calls him by the Aramaic equivalent, Cephas (כִּפּוּס, “stone, rock”; cf. Mt 10:2; Lk 24:34). Christ’s appearance to him must have been reassuring to Cephas after his shameful denial, and it prepared him for his leadership role in the days after Christ’s ascension (e.g., Lk 22:32; Acts 1:15; 2:14). (CC p. 554)

Jesus’ appearances to “the Twelve” (1 Cor 15:5) took place on the evening of the first Easter Sunday (Lk 24:33–36; Jn 20:19) and again a week later when Thomas was present (Jn 20:24–29). Although only ten members of the original Twelve were present on the first occasion (Judas Iscariot was dead and Thomas was absent), and only eleven the following Sunday, Paul is using the term “the Twelve” in a technical sense for those who constituted the original apostles whom Jesus called during his earthly ministry (Mt 10:2–4 and parallels). (CC pp. 554-55)

Continuing in chronological sequence, Paul comes to Jesus’ appearance to “more than five hundred brothers” (1 Cor 15:6). Since the evidence of two or three witnesses was sufficient to prove the veracity of an event, the presence of more than five hundred constitutes overwhelming testimony. There is no way of knowing when this event took place. One suggestion which fits the sequence is that it happened in conjunction with Jesus’ Great Commission to the eleven apostles prior to his ascension (Mt 28:16–20). Although Matthew does not mention that others were present, it seems that the apostles usually were accompanied by a larger group of Jesus’ disciples (cf. Lk 24:33; Acts 1:14–15; 13:31). (CC p. 555)

If anyone was still skeptical about these appearances of the risen Christ, he could easily check out the story himself by consulting some of these five hundred eyewitnesses. For most of them were still alive, though some had “fallen asleep” in Christ (1 Cor 15:6). This euphemism for Christian death is found again in 15:18, 20, and 51. It should be preserved in English translations because of its allusion to the resurrection. (CC p. 555)

The Lord’s next appearance was to James. This James was his half-brother, the second oldest son in the family (Mt 13:55). James and his younger brothers had initially refused to believe in Jesus (Jn 7:5), but this post-resurrection appearance proved to be a turning point, it seems, not only for James but also for his

brothers. Thus in the days between the ascension and Pentecost they joined the other believers at prayer in the upper room (Acts 1:14). Subsequently, James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; 21:18). Paul counted him among the “apostles” (Gal 1:19) and “pillars” (Gal 2:9) of the church universal. (CC p. 555)

Then Jesus appeared to “all the apostles” (1 Cor 15:7). If this includes “James” (15:7, the Lord’s brother) and possibly others in the five hundred, then it was a wider group than “the Twelve.” It would be James and the rest of Jesus’ brothers and men like Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, and others able to add their testimony as eyewitnesses of the risen Christ and commissioned to do so (cf. Acts 14:4, 14; Rom 16:7). Paul himself was later included in this wider apostolic group. How he came to be included in their number he will explain in the next pericope (1 Cor 15:8–11). (CC p. 555)

15:3 I delivered to you...*what I also received*. Here Paul links himself with early Christian tradition. He was not its originator, nor did he receive it directly from the Lord. His source was other Christians. The verbs he uses are technical terms for receiving and transmitting tradition (see note on 11:23). What follows is the heart of the gospel: that Christ died for our sins (not for his own sins; cf. Heb 7:27), that he was buried (confirmation that he had really died) and that he was raised from the dead. (CSB)

Though Paul had much to teach the Corinthians, nothing was more important than the Gospel. This is always true. The Gospel predominates in Christian teaching. (TLSB)

that Christ died ... with the Scriptures. These words form the heart of the Apostles’ Creed, which summarized the Gospel for the early Christians. “He suffered, died, and was buried so that He might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owe” (LC II 31). (TLSB)

15:4 *was raised* – *egagertai* – Paul switches to the perfect tense in order to express the ongoing significance of what happened on the third day. Not only was Jesus raised on that day, but he remains a risen Savior still today. (CC p. 550)

on the third day. Cf. Mt 12:40. The Jews counted parts of days as whole days. Thus the three days would include part of Friday afternoon, all of Saturday, and Sunday morning. A similar way of reckoning time is seen in Jn 20:26 (lit. “after eight days,” NIV “a week later”); two Sundays are implied, one at each end of the expression. (CSB)

15:5 *Cephas ... the Twelve*. The appearance to Peter is the one mentioned in Lk 24:34, which occurred on Easter Sunday. The appearance to the Twelve seems to have taken place on Sunday evening (see Lk 24:36–43; Jn 20:19–23). “The Twelve” seems to have been used to refer to the group of original apostles, even though Judas was no longer with them (notice, however, that the 11 disciples, the 11 apostles or “the Eleven” are referred to in Mt 28:16; Mk 16:14; Lk 24:9, 33; Ac 1:26). (CSB)

Lit, only 11 disciples at the time of the resurrection. However, “twelve” meant “the company of the apostles” for early Christians. (TLSB)

OT law stipulated that legal evidence should be corroborated by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The resurrection of Christ is so vital a fact for the Christian faith that God supplied an abundance of witnesses. (CC p. 554)

15:6 *more than five hundred ... at one time*. The appearance to this large group may be mentioned to help bolster the faith of those Corinthians who evidently had some doubts about the resurrection of Christ (cf. v. 12). This appearance may be the one in Galilee recorded in Mt 28:10, 16–20, where the Eleven and possibly more met the risen Lord. (CSB)

Scripture records numerous appearances of Jesus over the 40 days after the resurrection. Paul recounts six examples here. Apostles were not always alone when Jesus visited them (cf Lk 24:33; Ac 1:14–15; 13:31). Paul does not specifically appeal to the women who first saw Jesus after the resurrection. This may be because in Roman culture the testimony of women was not regarded as fully reliable. (TLSB)

some have fallen asleep. A common expression at that time for physical death (cf. Ac 7:60). (CSB)

Physical death. (TLSB)

James ... apostles. James, Jesus' half brother, is singled out because he came to lead the Jerusalem churches. (TLSB)

15:7 James. Since this James is listed in addition to the apostles, he is not James son of Zebedee or James son of Alphaeus (Mt 10:2–3). This is James, the half-brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55), who did not believe in Christ before the resurrection (Jn 7:5) but afterward joined the apostolic band (Ac 1:14) and later became prominent in the Jerusalem church (Ac 15:13). It is not clear in Scripture when and where this appearance to James occurred. (CSB)

to all the apostles. For example, Ac 1:6–11. (CSB)

15:8-11 Paul concludes the list of eyewitnesses who can attest to the fact of Jesus' resurrection, which is the foundation of the Gospel. In deep humility, he finally mentions himself. The Lord had appeared to him "last of all" (1 Cor 15:8). Thus on one important count he was not qualified to be an apostle in the strictest sense: he had not accompanied the other disciples during the three years or so that the Lord Jesus "went in and out" among them (Acts 1:21–22). Like a "premature birth" (ἔκτρωμα), he had not had the benefit of a full gestation period; he had been thrown into his apostleship in a sudden and unexpected fashion. Yet even he—a premature birth (1 Cor 15:8), a former persecutor (15:9)—had been given the privilege of becoming an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. (CC pp. 556-57)

In 15:9–10 Paul now elaborates on what he has just said about himself as "last of all," a premature birth (15:8). He considered himself the least of the apostles; indeed, in his epistle to the Ephesians, he called himself "the very least of all the saints" (Eph 3:8). To be a Christian at all was a high privilege for one who saw himself as "nothing" in God's sight (2 Cor 12:11; see also 1 Cor 3:7); to be a "called apostle" (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1) was a sign of unfathomable grace. Like Jacob in his later years, he knew he was not worthy of the least of the mercies God had shown his servant (Gen 32:10). (CC pp. 557)

Paul's consciousness of personal unworthiness was sharpened by the painful memory of the way he had persecuted the church of God. He acknowledged that he shared responsibility for the murder of the Lord's disciples (Acts 26:10; cf. Acts 9:1). In attacking God's saints, he had attacked the Son of God himself (Acts 9:4). For that affront to the divine Majesty, he knew he deserved death and eternal condemnation. But instead of condemnation, this chief of sinners had been privileged to receive God's astounding grace, mercy, and longsuffering love (μακροθυμία, 1 Tim 1:12–16; cf. 1 Cor 13:4), so that he had become the person he was: not only a saint, but even an apostle. Totally insufficient for these things in himself, the sufficiency of God had conferred this ministry on him and equipped him for it (2 Cor 2:16; 3:5–6; 4:1). (CC p. 557)

God's unmerited grace toward him had born rich fruit. Indeed, he had labored "more than them all" (1 Cor 15:10). Commentators debate whether this means "more than all the other apostles put together" or "more than any one of them"; probably it is the latter. Called by the One who came to serve and to give

his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45), Paul devoted long hours to wearisome toil and endured great hardships in his Master's service. (CC pp. 557-58)

While it was no empty boast but the simple truth that he had labored harder than anyone else, Paul refrains from continuing in this vein (cf. 2 Cor 12:6), lest anyone think he wanted the credit for himself. No, he says that "the grace of God that was with [him]" (1 Cor 15:10) was the master workman laboring alongside him. All the glory belonged to God alone and to Christ, who had worked in him and through him to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith (Rom 15:18; Gal 2:8). Apart from God's grace in Christ, Paul knew he could accomplish nothing. In 1 Cor 3:6-7 he stated, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was giving the growth. So neither the planter is anything nor the waterer, but only God, who does the growing" (cf. Jn 15:5). As one commentary aptly observes: "The Apostle's satisfaction with his own labours 'from a human point of view is as the joy of a child who gives his father a birthday present out of his father's own money.'" (CC p. 558)

Thus Paul's joy and confidence in the risen Christ had inspired him to fruitful labor in the Lord's service. The chapter ends with his appeal to the Corinthians to follow the pattern he had shown them, abounding in the Lord's work in the confidence that their labor, no less than Paul's, would not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58; cf. 3:12-15). (CC p. 558)

Paul now rounds off this first section of the chapter in 15:11. The other apostles and eyewitnesses had labored before him; he, as an untimely birth, had joined that great cloud of witnesses and entered into that same labor. So whether it was Paul himself or Cephas or the Twelve or any of the others Paul had listed (15:5-7), they all preached the same Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection (15:3-4). And it was to that common Gospel that the Corinthians owed their faith and hope of resurrection to eternal life. (CC p. 558)

15:8 *last of all.* † See Ac 9:1-8. This appearance to Paul came several years after the resurrection (perhaps c. A.D. 32 or 33). (CSB)

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul called himself "the very least of all the saints." (Eph 3:8) (CC p. 557)

one untimely born. Paul was not part of the original group of apostles. He had not lived with Christ as the others had. His entry into the apostolic office was not "normal." Furthermore, at his conversion he was abruptly snatched from his former way of life (Ac 9:3-6). (CSB)

Medical term for a premature birth, including stillbirth, miscarriage, and abortion. Possibly this insult was used by Paul's opponents to tear down his authority. Earlier, Paul asserted his authority; now he purposely humbles himself to emphasize God's grace (cf v 10). (TLSB)

ektromati – Untimely birth, miscarriage, to abort or any kind of premature birth. (CC p. 556)

15:9 *church of God.* In persecuting the church, he was actually persecuting Christ (see Ac 9:4-5). (CSB)

15:10 *not in vain* – kēna – Without result, without profit or without reaching its goal. (CC p. 556)

grace of God that is with me – The master workman laboring alongside him. All the glory belonged to God alone and to Christ, who had worked in him and through him to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith (Rom. 15:18; Gal. 2:8). (CC p. 558)

I worked harder – ekopiasa – To work to the point of weariness. (CC p. 556)

15:11 *so we preach.* Paul now ranks himself with the other apostles, demonstrating unity with them despite conflicts about his apostleship. (TLSB)

15:1–11 Because of zeal for more knowledge, the Corinthians have neglected what has first importance: the simple truths and application of the Gospel. How great is the temptation for us to overlook the Gospel today! A multitude of contemporary issues can crowd out the Gospel of life and forgiveness in Jesus until it grows unclear in our minds. Praise God for the wonderful creeds that our forebears have handed down across the centuries, which take up Paul’s very words, summarize the Holy Gospel, and etch it into our memories. • Holy Jesus, You died to take away my sins and rose to fulfill all the Father’s promises in Scripture. Send now Your Holy Spirit so that by Your grace I may stand in this faith always. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And he said 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. 7 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.” 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

16:1 *Sabbath was over.* About 6:00 P.M. Saturday evening. No purchases were possible on the Sabbath. (CSB)

After sundown on Saturday. (TLSB)

Mary Magdalene – Mary of Magdala (Magdalene). She was a leader among these women because she had received more than all the rest, and therefore her measure of devotion and love was greater. Fourteen times Mary is mentioned by name. In eight of these her name leads the list.

Somehow the name of this woman has come to be associated with fallen womanhood the world over largely because some scholars chose to identify her with the unnamed sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50. There is no evidence in the Bible to support this thought.

The women fully intend to go back to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus, for they “saw where he was laid” (15:47). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

Mary the mother of James – This was James the younger. (CSB)

Salome – Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John – Sister of Mary mother of Jesus.

spices. Embalming was not practiced by the Jews. These spices were brought as an act of devotion and love. (CSB)

Sweet-smelling ointments were usually wrapped around corpses in strips of cloth before entombment. (TLSB)

The women who witnessed the crucifixion and burial purchased aromatic oils with which to anoint the body of Jesus. Spices were not used for mummification, which was not a Jewish custom, but to offset the odors from decomposition. It is not uncommon to find in Palestinian tombs dating to the first century such funerary objects as perfume bottles, ointment jars, and other vessels of clay and glass designed to contain the aromatic oils. The desire of the women to anoint the body indicates that the oils were to be poured over the head. The preparations for returning to the tomb in performance of an act of piety show that the women had no expectation of an immediate resurrection of Jesus. Since the climate of Jerusalem deterioration would occur rapidly, the visit of the women with the intention of ministering to the corpse after two nights and a day must be viewed as an expression of intense devotion. (Lane)

to anoint him – The women had no expectation of Jesus’ resurrection. (CSB)

16:2 *very early* – Generally points to the time around 6 a.m., probably in the faint light of dawn. It is not difficult to conclude that Mark used the two terms *lian prōi* simply to connect the women’s trek to the tomb with the moment of sunrise. Note John’s testimony: “while it was still dark” (Jn 20:1). The precise moment of the beginning of their Easter marathon is less important than the resurrection finish line. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

first day. Sunday. (TLSB)

16:3 *they were saying to one another* – Mark is the only one of the synoptic gospels to record the words of the women’s conversation. In Mark, the problem is how to get to the body, considering the huge stone that would be blocking their way. On the other hand, Mark is the only one who does not give us an explanation of how it was moved from the entrance of the tomb. He simply states the fact. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

Who will roll the stone away ... ? Setting the large stone in place was a relatively easy task, but once it had slipped into the groove cut in bedrock in front of the entrance it was very difficult to remove. (CSB)

Although the women had witnessed the burial of Jesus and the closing of the entrance to the sepulcher (Ch. 15:47), they had no knowledge of the official sealing of the tomb by the Sanhedrin nor of the posting of a guard (cf. Mt 27:62-66). This is evident from the fragment of conversation preserved by Mark alone concerning the rolling back of the stone from the entrance to the tomb. While the setting in place of a large stone was a relatively easy task, once it had slipped into the groove cut in bedrock just before the entrance it could be removed only with great difficulty. Mark’s account is characterized by great restraint. The evangelist makes no attempt to explain how the stone was rolled back, but records simply that the women looked up and saw that it had been removed. (Lane)

16:5 *entering the tomb*. Inside the large opening of the facade of the tomb was a forechamber, at the back of which a low rectangular opening led to the burial chamber. (CSB)

young man...dressed in a white robe. Identified by Matthew (28:2) as an angel. See note on Lk 24:4. (CSB)

An angel. Angels typically appear in the form of young, adult males. (TLSB)

Inside the large opening in the façade of the tomb was an antechamber, at the back of which was a rectangular doorway about two feet high led inside. Small low doorways between the antechamber and

the burial chamber were standard features of Jewish tombs in this period. The inner chamber where the body had been laid was perhaps six or seven feet square, and about the same height. When the women entered the burial chamber they were startled to see “a young man clothed in a white robe, sitting on the right side.” Mark’s language could designate a valiant young man or an angel. (Lane)

In the LXX, the Jewish Apocrypha, and Josephus, *neaniskon* (“young man”) “designates young men who are exceptionally strong and valiant, or faithful and wise” (William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], p 527). It is therefore also an appropriate word to describe the mighty angels of God, who do his bidding. Lane remarks that “there is some detail in the context which makes this plain. In ch. 16:5 this detail seems to be the element of revelation” (p 527, fn 106). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

As frequently in the OT and the Jewish literature from the later period, the angel appears as the divine messenger. This conclusion is supported by the detail of the white garment. In the color symbolism of the NT, white is primarily the heavenly color and is mentioned almost exclusively in eschatological or apocalyptic contexts. In this instance the white clothes are not properly a description, but an indication of the dazzling character of their glory. The presence of the angel underscores the eschatological character of the resurrection of Jesus and anticipates the parousia when the Son of Man will come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels. (Lane)

were alarmed – The response of the women to the angelic presence is described by a strong word which Mark alone among the NT writers uses (cf. 9:15). It introduces the note of dread which is woven into the theme until it becomes the dominant motif in verse 8. Confronted with the messenger of God, the women were terrified. (Lane)

16:6 *do not be alarmed* – People were often filled with awe and fear in the presence of angels. (TLSB)

Jesus of Nazareth – This reference allows no equivocation concerning the subject of the emphatic statement. (Lane)

crucified. A Roman means of execution in which the victim was nailed to a cross. Heavy, wrought-iron nails were driven through the wrists and the heel bones. If the life of the victim lingered too long, death was hastened by breaking his legs. Archaeologists have discovered the bones of a crucified man, near Jerusalem, dating between A.D. 7 and 66, which shed light on the position of the victim when nailed to the cross. Only slaves, the basest of criminal, and offenders who were not Roman citizens were executed in this manner. First-century authors vividly describe the agony and disgrace of being crucified.

He has risen! The climax of Mark’s Gospel is the resurrection, without which Jesus’ death, though noble, would be indescribably tragic. But in the resurrection he is declared to be the Son of God with power (Ro 1:4). (CSB)

Luther says, “The blessed resurrection... is pure joy, because we hear that our greatest Treasure, over which we rejoice, is already in heaven above, and that only the most insignificant part remains behind; and that He will awaken this, too, and draw it after Him as easily as a person awakens from sleep. There will no longer be any grief or suffering, and neither world nor devil will plague and sadden us anymore.” (TLSB)

That Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, died, and was buried (“he is not here”) is historical fact. That the body was missing was obvious. That “he has risen” is known only by revelation and received only by faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The action of God is not always self-evident. For this reason it is invariably accompanied by the word of revelation, interpreting the significance of an event (e.g. Ex 15:1-18 interprets the flight from Egypt as the action of God). The emptiness of the tomb possessed no factual value in itself. It simply raised the question, what happened to the body? God, therefore, sent his messenger to disclose the fact of the resurrection. The announcement of the angel is the crystallization point for faith. (Lane)

The fact that women were the first to receive the announcement of the resurrection is significant in view of the contemporary attitudes. Jewish law pronounced women ineligible as witnesses. Early Christian tradition confirms that the reports of the women concerning embarrassing (cf. Lk 24:11, 22-24; Mk 16:11)). That the news had first been delivered by women was inconvenient and troublesome to the Church, for their testimony lacked the value as evidence. The primitive Community would not have invented this detail, which can be explained only on the ground that it was factual. (Lane)

16:7 *and Peter.* Jesus showed special concern for Peter, in view of his confident boasting and subsequent denials (14:29–31, 66–72). (CSB)

The expression “his disciples and Peter” corresponds to Ch 1:36, “Simon and those with him.” Peter is singled out because of his repeated and emphatic denial of Jesus (Ch 14:66-72). He has not been mentioned by Mark since that shameful occasion, and his disloyalty might well be regarded as an extreme example of sin and blasphemy which disqualified him from participating in Jesus’ triumph. Yet he had been forgiven (Ch 3:28). The summons to Galilee provided the assurance that Peter had not been rejected by the risen Lord. (Lane)

Galilee. Original home of Jesus and His disciples. This fulfills Jesus’ promise in 14:28. (TLSB)

you will see Him. “Examples of mercy help ... such as when we see Peter forgiven his denial” (Ap XXI 36). (TLSB)

just as he told you. Jesus foretold in 14:28 that he would meet his disciples in Galilee after his resurrection. Now the angel commissions the women to bring this promise (“just as he told you”) to the remembrance of “his disciples and Peter.” Peter is singled out because he was to be convinced of complete forgiveness for his sinful denial of Jesus (14:66–72). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

16:8 *trembling and astonishment...afraid* – This verse is supremely important. The vivid description of the women—“trembling and bewildered,” fleeing from the tomb in silence and fear—completes the primary motif of Mark’s gospel. When Jesus stilled the storm (4:41), his disciples “were terrified.” When he commanded the demons in the man in to enter the pigs, which then committed suicide by drowning, the people “were afraid” (5:15); so also the woman “trembling with fear” (5:33), the synagogue ruler (5:36), the disciples when they saw Jesus walking on the water (6:50), the comment about Peter’s ignorant babbling at the transfiguration (9:6), and the disciples’ reluctance (“fear”) to even begin to ask Jesus what he meant about being betrayed and killed (9:31–32). Mark’s repeated observation of this emotional reaction of fear serves as an indication of the presence and action of God. So here at the tomb, the women were aware of the nearness and power of God, who had raised Jesus from death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The statement finds its closest parallel in the transfiguration narrative, where Peter’s brash proposal to build three tabernacles calls forth the remark, “for he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid (Ch 9:6). Those who are confronted with God’s direct intervention in the historical process do not know how to react. (Lane)

they said nothing – The women were temporarily overcome by fear and could not speak (as were Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, 9:6). Luther says, “A Christian must accustom himself to think about Christ’s victory – the victory in which everything has already been accomplished and in which we have everything we should have. Henceforth we live only to spread among other people the news of what Christ has achieved.” (TLSB)

16:1–8 Three women undertake the job of properly preparing Jesus’ body for burial, which the press of time prevented earlier. When they arrive at the tomb, they find it empty and hear the wonderful (and temporarily paralyzing) message that Jesus has risen from the dead and the tomb is empty. In spite of Jesus’ clear predictions on at least three occasions (8:31–32; 9:31; 10:33–34), His disciples do not believe. Jesus rises from the dead, proclaiming His victory to all creation and providing for all believers a resurrection to eternal life on the Last Day. • “Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands For our offenses given; But now at God’s right hand He stands And brings us life from heaven. Therefore let us joyful be And sing to God right thankfully Loud songs of alleluia! Alleluia!” Amen. (*LSB* 458:1) (TLSB)