



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 8, 2012  
Easter Sunrise Worship  
Sermon Text: [John 20:1-18](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 12:1-6](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 30](#)  
Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 15:51-57](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [John 20:1-18](#)

### **Death Has Been Swallowed Up In Victory**

It all seems so final and it's a difficult time. As the family, usually you walk out into a cemetery, and there in the cemetery there is a hole dug in the ground. It almost looks as though the earth has opened its mouth and it's going to swallow the casket. You say your last prayers. You hear God's Word one last time. You go away and the next time you look, it appears that's exactly what has happened. The earth has swallowed up that casket. To our senses, it looks like death has won again. The ultimate undefeated enemy seems to conquer us all.

But as we gather together this morning to celebrate that the throat of death could not hold Jesus Christ, we are told by our God that we shouldn't really believe what we see. Instead, we should believe his promises because he paints a different picture for us this morning. He tells us death has been swallowed up in victory. The exact opposite of what our eyes appear to see. That's what Easter means for you and for me and for all Christians. Death has been swallowed up in victory.

The power of death comes from the power of sin. The power of sin is the power of the Law. You and I can't fulfill the Law because Adam and Eve broke God's command. Death has been a reality in this world, physical death, ever since. But God didn't abandon us to this enemy. He didn't leave us with what we deserve because the wages of sin is death, not just physical, but also eternal. Our God didn't leave us in the clutches of his enemy, Satan. He didn't abandon us to our own fates that we would really so richly deserve.

Instead God acted. He acted in a way that is unbelievable and amazing. God himself became human, lived in our place perfectly because God demands that perfection of you and me, and then put all of our sins on Jesus. Jesus carried them to the cross. When Christ cried out on Good Friday, "It is finished," our sins were paid for. So that you and I could live in the certainty of that payment made, on the third day Jesus rose from the dead and showed himself to the women, to the disciples and to numerous people over the 40 days until he returned to heaven. He did this so that we could know that death has been defeated. Death has been swallowed up in victory is what the apostle Paul writes for us today.

We talk about things the same way today. We talk about someone having such power over their enemy or playing another sports team or something, saying they chewed them up and spit them out. That's the way we talk about it yet, right? That image?

That's the image that God is using here. Our enemy, death, our enemy, Satan, has been chewed up and spit out. He has been swallowed up whole because Christ won the victory for us. This is the essential truth that we need to live in because our eyes at times tells us something completely and absolutely different. Our eyes tell us death wins the victory. Our loved one is gone. The pain is there. The grief is there. You heard it in our Gospel, what Mary was experiencing. It's what we see.

But as Christians, our God tells us again and again, don't walk by sight. Walk by faith. Walk by faith trusting that the victory has been won. Walk by faith trusting that the war is over. Christ defeated Satan. On this day, as we celebrate the resurrection, rejoice again that death couldn't hold Christ. He was put to death for our sins, Paul tells us, but he was raised to life for our justification. Jesus himself told us that, "Because I live you also will live." His resurrection from the dead guarantees our resurrection from the dead.

It doesn't matter...everyone that ever has died will be raised on the Last Day. To those who died in Christ believing that Jesus Christ is their Savior, those who died in that faith, they will be raised and given new and glorious bodies. They will spend eternity with us in those glorious bodies in the perfection that is heaven, where there is no more weeping, no more sorrow, no more tears. It's where we will live not only by faith, but we will live by sight in the presence of the God who loved us so much that he died for us, the God that loved us so much that he gave us his Spirit through water, through the Word, through wafer and through wine just so he could find as many ways as possible to say, "I love you. I won the victory. You're mine."