Grace and peace from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

 I have a proclamation to make that is Good News. He is risen…. Jesus is with us now in Spirit which nurtures us and enlivens us in the bread and wine of communion. Every Sunday we gather as we celebrate

Christ’s resurrection in the liturgy-our worship is a celebration of this central mystery of the faith, but today, the 3rd day he arose according to scripture is a special celebration as we celebrate the Lamb of God. Sit back, relax and enjoy as you join in the celebration.

 I have to admit. When I was a young person I found attending a church service to be boring. Originally, I attended mass which was in Latin, a language I did nor speak, so I wasn’t sure what was going on. Then, after Vatican 2 masses were in English and I had a better idea but still didn’t understand what the liturgy was all about. Most of the sermons I listened to at the church I attended were about how important tithing was. My mom did the tithing so it was hard to relate to what was being preached. I lived in fear because I was scared of God. It wasn’t until years later that I discovered worship is celebration. A celebration that is defined by the liturgy or pattern of worship as we are connected with those who celebrated in the same way when they gathered more than a thousand years ago. We are gathered together by the Holy Spirit to be energized and nurtured as we hear God in scripture, preaching and song and then we are sent out into the world to do for others as we say thanks be to God.

 The celebration is not one of paper hats and noise makers and confetti. That belongs to the hope for the New Year. In fact, Lutherans are not known for being demonstrative, making noise or raising and waving their hands in the air. Someone once said the reason Lutherans don’t raise their hands is because they are afraid God might call on them. I wonder sometimes when it talks about joy why we don’t seem more joyous. But we do celebrate. Look just a few years back when we could not even gatherer together in person and what we missed. We learned the significance of the Psalmist saying “Be still and know that I am God.” There was no group celebration. We lived I a quiet time. We are joyful and celebrate nevertheless. We are joyful in the hope we have for our future because Christ appears not only to the women who are leaving the tomb but to us and we are now able to taste and see Jesus in the bread and wine of the eucharist.

 *Nicetas of Nicomedia, a 12th Century Archbishop says “*If you would learn of God the Father, listen to this word. When it is too dark for you to see, seek Christ, for he is the light. Would you know by whom the world was made and all things are sustained? Believe in him, for he is the arm and right hand. Are you afraid of this or that? Remember that on all occasions he will stand by your side like an angel. If you do not know the way of salvation, look for Christ, for he is the road for souls. If it is truth that you want, listen to him, for he is the truth. If you are afraid that your body is failing and have a dread of death, remember that he is the resurrection, and can raise up what has fallen.

 Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Pastor and Theologian. His writings on Christianity's role in the secular world have become widely influential; his 1937 bookThe Cost of Discipleship is described as a modern classic. Because Bonhoeffer collaborated with the German resistance that challenged the Nazi regime and was implicated in a plot to kill Adolf Hitler. he was arrested and was sent to Flossenburg concentration camp where he wrote extensively and his works were smuggled out of the camp to be published later. Bonhoeffer was hung alongside fellow resistors at Flossenburg after a trial with no witnesses, no records of proceedings and no defense, on this day in the dawn, April 9, 1945, seventy-eight years ago today, less than a month before the Germans surrendered. In his sermon titled The Mystery of Easter, Pastor Dietrich proclaims: “Christ did not come into the world that we might understand him, but that we might cling to him, that we might simply let ourselves be swept away by him into the immense event of the resurrection”. It is the resurrection that freed him from the terror of death. We celebrate the resurrection that frees us from the terro of death as we take God into our hearts and minds as we embrace signs of God’s kingdom as we participate in its struggle as we enjoy the freedom to do for others without fear of the future.

 As Paul’s letter to the Colossians says “You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” We already died with Christ in the baptismal font but the Good News is we will raise with Christ in his glorious resurrection. He is risen… As Psalm 118:22 says “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” Come see and celebrate, do and to serve as we love others the way Jesus loves us. Amen.