

knows, maybe these very leaders had desecrated and destroyed His body?"

That Jesus had risen from the dead was the one thing which did not occur to them. That was because the simple, unassailable truth is this: people who are dead for three days don't come back to life. Dead is dead. You know it; I know it; these women knew it.

Fearing the worst, the women gathered their courage and respectfully, slowly, tentatively entered Jesus' grave. The Gospel of Mark says what happened next. It tells us, "They saw a young man sitting on the right side of the walk-in tomb. He was dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed." I can understand why. Mark continues, "And he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen.' " Christ has risen!

May I try to tell you, in small part, what those three words mean? For the women it meant their Friend, their Rabbi, their Master, their Teacher, was also their Savior.

According to prophecy, completing His own prediction, Jesus had kept His promise. Before He had been arrested He had said, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again" (John 10:17). It was an outrageous statement, one that no man could keep. But, as these women found out in the next few minutes, Jesus was no mere man.

A living Lord appeared to them and entrusted these women with a mission: tell the disciples Christ is risen. (He is risen, indeed!) That truth meant they would always be living with Jesus. It meant they would always live on the edge.

Today, 2,000 years later their mission is yours — their message is yours. The Savior lives and that means you who live with Him will also live on the edge. I say that because you, dear friends in Christ, live in a land where the U.S. Supreme Court begins every session with an invocation. It's true, every session starts: "**God save the United States** and this Honorable Court!" But that same court who prays God's blessings upon their work, refused to hear the case of Marcus Borden, a New Jersey football coach. Coach Borden had wanted to kneel in prayer with his team. Understand he didn't want to organize or lead the prayers; he just wanted to bow his head.

You live in an age where living with Jesus means you live on the edge. Yours is a time when the President of the United States can ask for God's blessing when he is installed; and after terrorists bring down the World Trade Center, Congress can stand on the Capital steps and sing, "God Bless America."

But Erica Corder, a valedictorian in Monument, Colorado, can't speak about Jesus. Indeed, Erica was told she wouldn't get her diploma until she apologized for having said: "If you don't already know (Jesus Christ) personally I encourage you to find out more about the sacrifice He made."

You live in an age where living with Jesus means you live on the edge. This past Resurrection day a church in California spent thousands to make a movie advertising the Savior's rising and invite people to worship. Even though they had a signed contract, the movie houses rejected that pre-movie ad. The reason? Saying the name "Jesus" as in "Jesus is the Savior" is too controversial. Patrons to those movie houses can hear the Lord's name taken in vain. They can hear it in cursing, but they can't hear He is the Christ.

You live in an age where living in Christ means you live on the edge. Talk to your sisters in Iraq whose leaders told them: 'Stay home from church on Christmas and Easter because terrorists are going to attack us.' The terrorists did and many died living on the edge.

Talk to almost any student at any state-run institution of higher education; ask them what will happen if they profess their faith in Christ.

Take a look at the media. If you do, it won't take too long before you realize almost every pastor or priest shown in movies or on TV is a platitude-spouting prude or a pathetic pervert; most Christian parents are portrayed as undeniably dense and church people are intolerant, ignorant idiots. On the news the scandals of Christians are publicly paraded, repeatedly rehashed, criticized, and condemned.

Unnoticed and unshared are the multitudes of faithful undershepherds of the Savior who have dedicated their lives to a proper preaching of the Word. Unrecognized and unapplauded are the millions of Christians who are good neighbors, good citizens, good parents, and good witnesses to Jesus Christ who has saved them by His birth, sinless suffering, death, and

resurrection from the dead.

It hasn't been so many years since a very skilled and talented lecturer came to a town, a town not so unlike this one. He had achieved some degree of fame with his presentation which elevated humanity by demoting the Deity of Christianity. After his lecture he gave his listeners a chance to respond.

One night the lecturer finished and an elderly lady stood up and said, "I paid good money to hear you tell me about something better than Jesus. You didn't do that. I've been a widow for 30 years. When my husband died, he left me with six children. I trusted the Lord and He helped me. Each day He gave me enough to raise them. When a daughter died, He comforted me with the idea of a reunion in heaven."

The lady continued, "From what you've said tonight, you're thinking that's nonsense, it's the imaginings of an old woman. Some here might believe that. I don't. The Redeemer is real. Now, you can give me something better than what God has given or you can give me back my money."

With derision dripping from his voice, the lecturer responded: "Ma'am, you're so content living in your delusion, I wouldn't try to convince you otherwise." Hearing that, she stopped him cold. "No, no, no, that won't do. Truth is truth and your laughing at me doesn't change things. Young man, your lecture shows me this: you have too high of an estimation of yourself and too low an idea of God. I will not let you take away my Savior who died to forgive me. Sir, I've met Jesus, seen Him, talked to Him; I've been saved by Him. Let me ask, sir, in place of Jesus, you would give me what?"

That was a Christian who was living in the Lord and at that moment was living on the edge. This room is filled with her sisters and brothers. Many of you have met Jesus, talked to Him, been forgiven, and saved by Him. He has comforted you in life's tragedies and given you a sure and certain knowledge of forgiveness.

You know that when unbelief has done its withering work in the hearts of humankind, when the world has tried to shove the Savior back into His grave, when it has tried to dethrone Him from His seat in heaven, when it has slammed shut the door of salvation, the questions of life remain and all the world can offer to take his place is a darkening despair and a future filled with fear of an open grave.

You who live in the Lord, today I encourage you to live on the edge. It is time to stand up and say to the world, "What do you have to offer which is better than Jesus? You have laughed at the Savior, His suffering, His crucifixion, His death, and His resurrection. Yet, the living Lord has comforted countless Christians as they stood by the bedside of a sick child or at the graveside of a departed loved one."

It is time for us to live on the edge and say, "You laugh at Christian families, but what do you have to offer which is better than having Jesus sit at the supper table with you and invoke His presence by praying: 'Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest?'"

It is time for us to live on the edge and say to the so-called smarties of the world, "Your way creates families which are filled with bitterness and strife, children who want and are never satisfied, teens who feel neglected and ignored, and women who find no man to trust, honor, or respect.

You offer a land where Jesus is banished from official proceedings and offer nothing to stem the tide of disobedience which fills prisons to overflowing, which brings down one elected official after another, which makes one appointed person after another remove his name from consideration for office because his life cannot stand the scrutiny."

It is time to ask, "What do you have to offer which is better than Jesus? What can provide a better foundation than the Christ?"

And to the silence which must come after that question is asked, we will extend the invitation, "Then come join us. Join this throng of the redeemed who are committed to the cause of Christ. Join us, the forgiven, the saved, who live in the Lord Jesus. Join us as we live on the edge."

And if we do this, as the Savior has asked us to, the devil will learn, as every Lutheran pastor has learned, "You don't mess with the LWML."

Even more, he will know "vut site ve are on." ("*What side we are on.*") He will know we are Christian comrades committed to the cause of Christ. He will know Christians are people willing to live on the edge.

We are God's witnesses telling any and all who would listen, the wonderful blood-bought truth which saves: Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed. Amen.