



THE FESTIVAL OF THE RESURRECTION

27 March 2005

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118

Colossians 3:1-4

Matthew 28:1-10

The angel said to the women, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.”

Galilee. Why of all places would Jesus go there to show his resurrected self? Galilee—shorthand for Galil ha’goyim—Region of the Heathens. Galilee, once the northern part of the Kingdom of Israel, but now a broken and conquered territory. Conquered and colonized first by the Assyrians, then in successive waves by Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Egyptians, and Syrians. By the time of Jesus, the original people of Israel were very few in number, and many, if not most of them, were intermarried with godless heathens of one sort or another. Anyone claiming to be a true Hebrew was likely a half-breed at best, and it was an area much looked down upon by the keepers of religion in Jerusalem—the people of Galilee had intermingled the Hebrew traditions with so many other cultic practices that nothing even resembling decent religion could be found there. Why would the risen Christ wish to make himself known in such a god-forsaken place as Galilee? And why would Jesus ever desire to show himself to his cowardly disciples, the very disciples who had only three days earlier denied and deserted them?

Red Lake, Minnesota. Arguably the poorest Indian reservation in the United States, and the Red Lake Indian Nation, a conquered people—a people no one really gives a damn about. A people seemingly cursed—ringed ‘round by poverty, drunkenness, depression, suicide, fetal-alcohol syndrome, and drug addiction. Red Lake Indian Reservation—a place and a people as different from Jefferson County and Columbine High School as anyone could ever imagine—except for what happened there on Monday of this Holy Week. What happened Monday at Red Lake ranks second behind the Columbine High School massacre as the worst school shooting in the nation’s history. At Columbine, two shooters, Dylan Klebold and Erik Harris, killed 13 people before they killed themselves. At Red Lake, one shooter, Jeff Weise, killed 9 people before turning his gun on himself. Joe Garner writes in yesterday’s *Rocky Mountain News*: “The Columbine killers were reviled in Jefferson County, and trees that had been planted days after the killings as a sign of forgiveness and remembrance of the young killers were chopped down. But in Red Lake, Weise is remembered among the victims of the tragedy he caused. His name is written large on a sign near the names of students he killed, 10 red candles placed at the bottom of a section of fence.” Ten yellow roses at a memorial. And Chongai’la Morris, a survivor of the shooting says, “I forgive him for what he did.”

And the angel said, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.”

There, at Red Lake, there in the forgiveness of a grave and tragic sin, there in that seemingly godforsaken place—there stands the Risen Christ.

There and here—this day—amongst us sinners—amongst us and all sinners who will never, ever by our own

thoughts and deeds come within a thousand miles of righteousness—there and here amongst us sinners who by our thoughts and deeds make of our worlds a Galilee, a Region of the Heathens—Galilee, and the Red Lake Indian Reservation, and here and anywhere and anytime forgiveness rises radical, unconditional, untamed, untrammled, overflowing, and free—here and here the Risen Christ appears, glorious in his cosmic victory over death.

And so beloved people of God, very truly I tell you, the Risen, glorious, victorious Christ is here today—in the one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and in the Eucharist, the Risen Christ's true body and blood—given and shed—for you, for each and every single one of you—and for all people, and yes, for Jeff Weise, Dylan Klebold, Erik Harris—for the radical, unconditional, untamed, overflowing and free forgiveness of all your sin, past, present, future, and forever.

And the angel said: "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee: there you will see him. This is my message for you."