Matthew 28:1-10

It’s probably not surprising to you that the world’s largest high definition digital billboard now exists right in the middle of New York City’s Times Square (77.69 feet by 329.65 feet, which is about the size of a football field). This billboard is unlike any you’ve ever seen. It spans an entire city block and is visible from any vantage point in Times Square. The billboard can be clearly seen whether it’s broad daylight or two o’clock in the morning because it is essentially a giant hd tv that is mounted on the outside wall of a building. Advertisers are promised that more than two million people will see the sign’s messages every single week.

Times Square is sometimes called “The Crossroads of the World.” About 460,000 people visit that tourist site every day and more than 500,000 vehicles pass through every week. If you want to send a message to a significant portion of the world, this may quite possibly be the best way to do so. You can send your message day or night, night or day, every day of the year, with people from all over America and all over the world viewing your most important message, whatever it may be.

In his sermon for Easter Eve of 1532, Martin Luther said: “The words, Christ is risen from the dead, we should display and inscribe with letters so large that just one letter would be as large as a steeple, yes, as heaven and earth, so that we would see and hear, know and think of, nothing but this article.” Luther could never have imagined a high definition digital billboard in Times Square, but he most certainly had a very similar grandiose idea nearly 500 years ago. Use whatever means necessary, he said, to shout to the world that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

Today we celebrate the fact that Eden, the paradise of God, has been recreated and made new again. Adam and Eve brought sin into the world with their web of deceit and lies. With sin came our most cruel enemy: death. With death came the destruction of everything that was perfect and good. Eden was destroyed and life would now come to an end for every living and created things.

Our own little paradise has been destroyed with our personal web of deceit and lies. Death has entered our lives, our families and our community. Every human being lives in fear of death. No one, nothing can escape it. It is the enemy we must all face. Thanks to Adam and Eve paradise has been lost. But the blame rests on us, as well. We can’t escape the words: “I have sinned by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault.” Yes, death came into the word by one man, but we also put nails in our own coffin. The message we advertise with our own lives is far too often sin, selfishness and death.

We are the walking dead. But a shining angel have a proclamation for us today: “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” The crucifixion of Christ has more than paid the price for our selfish sin. The resurrection of Christ is the deposit guaranteeing our own resurrection. All those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus have put on Christ. We have been given the foundational gift of faith. We have certain hope that because of Christ’s resurrection we too shall rise from the dead. The prophet Hosea prophesied long ago what will now come to pass: “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.”(Hos6:2)

That is the guarantee for our future. Eternal death is no more for those who are in Christ. Because of him, we too will be raised from physical death. Paradise is now restored for us, it is now here for us because paradise means to be with God. The promise of the dying Jesus to the thief beside him is for us today also: “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”

Through this, the almighty God has created his own high definition light-up billboard to proclaim to the world that “Christ is risen from the dead!” It’s not confined just to Times Square. It doesn’t only reach two million people per week. It is on display anywhere and everywhere God’s people go. It is as high and as wide and as deep as the world. It spans from east to west and from north to south. God’s people is that light that enlightens and shows to the world the gospel of the risen Jesus.

You are the light of Christ. You are his banner and billboard. All of God’s people, wherever they live, are little Christs shining the light of his resurrection. Almighty God sends his message day and night, night and day, every day of the year, through his people who are alive and living. One little life is enough to shine eternal light for someone who hopelessly lives in darkness. Just imagine the impact when God’s people come together to light up this dark world. It’s far brighter than the brightest billboard. It is a light that is never snuffed. This light cannot be quenched, even by death.

Most importantly today, this light is for you. “Christ is risen from the dead.” He is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Adam’s death has no mastery over you. Christ’s resurrection reigns supreme. He is the Light of the World. He now lives his life and shines his light through you. Today, and always, as Luther says, we “see and hear, know and think of, nothing but this article.”