

“HE IS RISEN”

I cannot think of a time in recent memory where there is a bigger need for hope, for something that can breathe life into the human spirit because so many people, who a few months ago felt like they were on pretty solid ground, now find themselves in circumstances they never would have predicted. A lot of people are feeling anxious, they have pressures that they did not have a few short weeks ago. They may have lost jobs, have little stored up in savings, and have kids at home trying to do school online. They're wondering where things will stand a year from now.

You know, nobody ever wants a season of hard times or challenges to come, but when they do, they have a way of making us stand back and ask, "What am I really counting on? Am I building my life on a foundation that's solid enough that circumstances beyond my control cannot take it away?" That's why I've been looking forward to this weekend because we remember the only hope capable of sustaining a human life through everything.

People have not gathered for the past 2,000 years to say, "The stock market has risen. It has risen indeed." They've not gathered to say the employment rate has risen, or the online school platform has risen, or the essential nature of your job has risen.

Here's the one hope that has held human beings over thousands of years across every continent and culture together in the face of difficult times of poverty, of disease, of pain, of hardship, of death itself:

“Christ is risen...” then people often add one additional word: ***“indeed.”***

Why do we say, “He is risen indeed?”

Some people believe the resurrection was not a miracle. They think it wasn't something that actually, literally happened. It was kind of a metaphor. The idea being that after Jesus died, His disciples found themselves still thinking about Him and His teachings. It was kind of like He was still alive in their memories, and the idea of resurrection kind of evolved as a symbol. This idea says, essentially, we all know when you die, you die and that's it. So the resurrection is really just kind of a metaphor for the human spirit or for human optimism, but it didn't really happen. There is still a body in that tomb.

Of course, the problem with this thinking is that something happened to galvanize a little group of people 2,000 years ago, and they were not transformed by the idea that Christ was risen metaphorically. They did not sacrifice land, property, possessions, reputation, vocations, and positions based on a symbol. They didn't go to their death voluntarily...by the thousands...believing they would be resurrected metaphorically.

They did it because they believed Christ is risen! It really happened.

They understood all about death. They knew what it looked like. This Jesus they followed died, and then three days later, the tomb was empty. You might think at first that the body had just been moved, and at first, that's what they thought too. Then they said the strangest thing happened. This same Jesus began to appear to people... to Mary Magdalene in the garden, to the disciples in the upper room, even Thomas.

Then, within two decades of Jesus' death, Paul wrote to a church at Corinth that after Jesus was raised from the dead, He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters, ***“...most of whom are still living.”*** In other words, this really happened.

You can go ask them. Now, you don't write words like that unless the eyewitnesses will actually back it up. See, this is not the kind of thing you do if you're writing about a metaphor or a symbol.

Jesus appeared to two of His followers on the road to Emmaus, and they were so struck, they said, **"Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us..."** They ran to His disciples and they said to them, **"It is true. The Lord has risen."**

That's the phrase right there "it is true," that's where the word "indeed" in the church's greeting comes from. It's true. It really happened. It's not a metaphor.

There is only one explanation that accounts for the overnight transformation of an impoverished, confused, frightened little group of people into a courageous, emboldened community that would sacrifice everything including their lives to turn a world upside down, and that is that they actually believed this. That this Jesus, their teacher, their master, who they saw die on a cross, whose body they put in a tomb, He did what He said He would do. He is who He claimed that He was.

The Lord is risen ... He is risen indeed. It really happened, they said.

Now, I want to share with you what that means for you and for me:

Christ's Resurrection means that your worth does not fluctuate.

Recently, you may have heard people say things like, "I'm worth 33% of what I was a year ago." Or, "My job isn't considered essential, so that must be true of me also." No, a year ago you were worth the life of His Son to God. That's still what you're worth today. That will still be what you're worth tomorrow. You're still essential to God's plans.

Imagine a few days after resurrection, the disciples James and John are talking with each other. And John were to say to James, "Jesus is risen indeed, but my fishing business has dropped off 33%. I feel like such a failure. I'm not sleeping well. I'm anxious. I don't know when things will turn around. It may be years before the fish ever start biting again the way they used to bite."

I think James would have said, "Are you crazy? He is risen, and you're standing here telling me you can't sleep because of how many fish you're catching? If He has risen, who cares how the fish are biting? They're only fish. It's only money."

He is risen indeed, and that means money does not get to say how much you are worth. Your vocation, your title, your position, how things are going (up or down) does not get to say your worth. Some of you may have been beating yourselves up during this crisis because of what has happened in your job or to your bank account. You can walk into the future with your head held high because to the God who created everything, to the God of the universe, you are worth more than every dollar, drachma, euro, peso, rupee, ruble, pound, mark and yen ever printed. You are worth the life of God's Son, and He died on a cross, and He was resurrected, and He is risen indeed!

Christ's Resurrection means that your future is not at risk.

No matter what happens, your future is not up for grabs. One of my favorite characters in history is **Winston Churchill**. One of the things I love most about him was his sheer pugnacity He once gave a commencement address after World War II, and the whole text of the address was,

"Never give up, never give up, never give up."

He was a tough guy - Churchill.

But even Winston Churchill could not defeat death. When he was an old man he died. He planned every detail of his funeral, and at the end of it...after every word had been spoken, after the benediction had been pronounced, before the people left. Churchill had a bugler put high up in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and he began to play **Taps**, the universal signal that the day is done. There was silence. Everybody in that vast audience thought about this great life and how now it's done.

Then after the silence, there was one more song. There was another bugler on the far side of the dome that began to play **Reveille**...the time to get up, the song of the new day. Why did he do that?

Because one day the greatest man who ever lived said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Churchill was a remarkable guy, but he never said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Only Jesus said that.

Will your future have problems? Of course your future will have problems. Is there a good chance that you will die eventually? There is a *very* good chance that you will die eventually. Does that make Jesus nervous? Not at all. Why not? He has already died. He has already taken on Himself the worst that death can do, and He is risen. He is risen indeed!

Christ's Resurrection means that your past is not unforgivable

There was an engineer about a century ago with General Electric by the name of Charles Steinmetz. He was a genius. He knew every detail of every part of every machine that they operated in those days, and when he retired, when he left, they were sometimes clueless about what to do when things broke down because they depended on him so heavily.

They had a malfunction one time that nobody could solve and they had to call him in from retirement. He looked at the machine for about five minutes, took out a piece of chalk, marked an 'X' on the defective part so that they could replace it and went home. Five days later they got a bill from Charles Steinmetz for \$10,000. That was a lot of money for five minutes of work. So they asked him to itemize it.

So a few days later he sent them back a bill with two items:

Making a chalk mark...\$1.

Knowing where to put it...\$9,999.

Who do you call when your life breaks down? Who do you call when you have a marriage that falls apart, or you mess up as a parent? Who do you call when you violate your values, or handle anger in a way that just embarrasses you, or get trapped in deceit, or get greedy and it destroys your business? Who do you call when you get hooked on an addiction that ends in humiliation?

Who do you call? You call Jesus.

Romans 5: 6-8 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Nothing you have ever done is beyond God's ability to cleanse and forgive because the Messiah who died on a cross is risen indeed.

Christ's Resurrection means that the best is yet to come.

Wherever you've traveled, however old you are, you have not seen the best yet. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus, the best is yet to come.

It's kind of a funny thing in our day. We'll talk about almost anything, but we don't like to talk about death. We don't like to think about death. We don't even like to say the name. Life is okay, we play a game called *Life*, we eat a cereal called *Life*... But you ever see a cereal called Death? For people who like to wake up really slowly in the morning? We buy a product called life insurance. This is kind of odd, what do you have to do to collect it? You have to die. You don't buy it in case you live, but nobody calls it death insurance, that would be too depressing.

We don't know how to handle death. But Jesus does.

John 11:25-26 *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."*

That's what the resurrection can mean to you, but then that still leaves the question: ***How will you respond?***

There is a bloodstained cross. There is an empty tomb. There is a risen Savior. God has done all of this. And God says to you, "I will be your forgiver. I will be your guide. I will be your friend. I will be your Savior." ***Will you say yes?***

Maybe you have drifted a long way from God, but it is not farther than God can reach in Jesus. He has reached people a lot farther away than you. This is not about religion. This is about a *relationship* with Jesus, and you can say yes. What a great time to do it! You can let go of the fear or confusion or pride or sin or whatever it is that keeps people from God. It's just this simple...

"God, I want to commit my life to You. I receive Your gift of grace in Jesus."

Maybe Jesus is already a part of your life. Maybe you have already received this gift and committed yourself to Him and you just want to say to Him right now,

"God, thank You for the resurrection hope. I recommit myself to following Jesus"

*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!*

*Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!*

*Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!*

Prayer: *God thank You that in a fallen world, in an uncertain season, in a troubled time, Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. We're so grateful. Thank You for the hope that is ours in Him. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.*