

It was the first Easter Sunday morning, and the women walked to Jesus' tomb with arms full of spices and hearts full of disappointment. Their Lord, teacher, friend, Messiah was dead. Brutally executed by Roman soldiers. We can only imagine the turmoil and thoughts swirling in their heads. His death meant sadness. Broken promises. Confusion. Hopelessness. Loneliness. Lack of direction. Continued guilt. But as they rounded the corner and looked toward the tomb, everything changed. Listen to resurrection account from Matthew's Gospel:

**Matthew 28:1-10 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When those women heard and believed that Jesus had risen, it changed everything for them. And it changes everything for us as well. You see in our time here on earth, we deal with the exact same questions and problems that those women wrestled with on the way to the tomb. Think about your own life... are you right now dealing with one or more of the following issues? Sadness. Broken promises. Confusion. Hopelessness. Loneliness. Lack of direction. Continued guilt.

Well, there is some good news for you today. You see, the resurrection of Christ is not some feel good come-back from behind story that's supposed to encourage you to keep on trying. Not at all. The resurrection of Christ is a factual event in real human history... and it's an event that changes everything for you and me today!

#### **PT. 1: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES**

Isn't it disheartening when someone breaks their word to you? They say they'll do something, and then they don't. When that happens, trust is broken between two people. We can't believe what they say anymore. And even when they tell us the truth from that point on, it's hard to believe them... doubts remain. Relationships have been permanently broken by unkept promises.

How important is it for us, then, to know for a fact that God keeps his promise? Always! Here's the good news. God leaves a long track record for us of promises made and promises kept. It's

all recorded in the pages of Scripture for your review. But of special interest to us today is the greatest promise God ever made. He promised to send a Savior who would remove the guilt of all of our sins. Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of that promise. How do we know it's true?

One day the apostle Paul was proclaiming this exact good news to some Jewish people who had not yet heard of Jesus. How would he convince them that God had kept his promise of a Savior? Listen:

**Acts 13:26-37** “**Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.**

Paul continues by quoting prophecies from the Psalms about the resurrection from the dead. Prophecies (or we could call them promises) that were fulfilled in Christ.

So we would *know*... God promised, both through prophecies and through the mouth of Jesus himself, that Jesus would not remain in the grave, but that he would rise again. His resurrection became the proof and the guarantee that when God promises that you are saved and your guilt is gone forever... you can believe that God kept that promise! And since God kept that greatest of all promises, you can be sure that he will keep all the other promises he has made to us as well. Rejoice this Easter morning, for Christ's resurrection means God keeps his promises!

Hymn #162 “He Is Arisen! Glorious Word”

## PT 2: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

If I asked the question: “What did God do to remove the guilt of our sins?” I know what you would answer. You would say, “He sent Jesus who died on a cross to remove my guilt forever!” Great answer! But wait... doesn't that make the resurrection an afterthought? Why can we rightly entitle this section: “Christ's resurrection means our sins are forgiven?”

The apostle Paul said: **Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

Maybe this illustration will help. Most of you know our family lived in Russia for 12 years where I served as a missionary. Let me briefly describe for you what a Soviet era store is like. The Soviet era store was designed to completely eliminate the threat of shop lifting. All of the goods in the store are behind the counter where the customer can't get their hands on them. You

tell the clerk what you would like to buy. The clerk adds it all up and tells you the total. But you don't pay the clerk. There is a separate booth, locked and enclosed, with a cashier sitting inside. You tell the cashier the total you owe, and you pay. The cashier gives you the receipt and you take the receipt back to the clerk... who double checks that you paid correctly. She then puts a small tear in the receipt to show that the receipt is used, and gives you the goods that you purchased.

Not very efficient, but 100% guarantee of payment. Now... where was payment for the goods made? At the cashier! But I still needed the receipt... the proof of payment... in order to receive my goods.

Now, how does this relate to the resurrection? The payment for sin Jesus made at the cross. That's like paying at the cashier. Full payment made there. But it was Christ's resurrection which was the proof and guarantee of the payment. The resurrection is the receipt, and with that receipt, we are guaranteed to receive the forgiveness of all our sins. **He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.** His resurrection proves we are fit for God! We are set right with God! Christ's resurrection means our sins are forgiven!

HYMN #147, v.1-3 "LIKE THE GOLDEN SUN ASCENDING"

PT 3: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS THE SACRAMENTS ARE POWERFUL

**1 Peter 3:21-22 This water (the flood waters that saved Noah from a wicked world) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.**

If I said, "Give some instances where water can save a person." You probably wouldn't answer, "A flood!" and you certainly wouldn't think of the worldwide flood at the time of Noah. But Peter did. Noah and his family were in a wicked world and their eternal souls were in danger. The flood waters God sent upon the earth destroyed wicked man, and saved righteous Noah and his family were in the ark. The waters of baptism save us from wickedness also! A washing... not one that takes dirt from the body... but one that washes away sin... and so we receive the pledge from God that our conscience is good toward him. We stand "not guilty."

But how do I know baptism has such saving power? For that matter, how do I know the Lord's Supper has saving power? It's because of the promise connected with those sacraments... the promise of the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has all authority. The risen one promises that in these sacraments, you are connected to him and all he promises in them is yours. Rejoice in the powerful forgiveness granted through the powerful sacraments backed by the Word of our powerful and risen Lord Jesus Christ! **Christ's resurrection means the sacraments are powerful!**

HYMN #147, v.5 "LIKE THE GOLDEN SUN ASCENDING"

#### PT 4: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS WE CAN LIVE A NEW LIFE

Christ's resurrection doesn't just guarantee future blessings for you. It guarantees blessings for you right now, in your daily life, too! One of those current blessings is power for godly living. Honestly, this particular section is one you really have to chew on. All we'll get here is a little taste. Read through these verses again several more times this week as your Easter devotion.

**Romans 6:1-14 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?** [Apparently, some were beginning to teach that since we're saved by God's undeserved kindness fully through life and death of Christ, and guaranteed by his resurrection... we can sin as much as we want. In fact, the more we sin, the more God forgives, which means the more grace he pours out, and, hey, grace is a good thing, isn't it?! Paul says, "Enough of such foolish thinking. We will not live in sin any longer. And here is why: ] **Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.**

Baptized into Christ, with faith in him, you died with him to sin when he died on the cross. You were buried with him in that tomb in Palestine. And when he rose from the dead, glorified, leaving sin behind in the tomb, your rose with him, leaving sin behind too!

**For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. The death Christ died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

You have already died with Christ to sin, so you have been set free from sin! Free to live a new life for God. Living for God by serving him and others is real living. It's a new life. It's a glorious life.

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.**

In short: Christ's resurrection means we can live a new life!

HYMN #147, v.4 "LIKE THE GOLDEN SUN ASCENDING"

#### PT 5: CHRIST' RESURRECTION MEANS WE WILL BE CONTROVERSIAL

Briefly some context for this next reading. Paul is preaching to a bunch of thinkers and philosophers in Athens, Greece, of all places! What we have here is a little snippet of his message to them that day. He said:

**Acts 17:29-32** “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. [Athens was full of such man-made idols that they called “gods.”] **In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”** When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”

Paul had their full attention... until he got to the part about Jesus rising from the dead. At this many of them scoffed at Paul. But a few of them were intrigued by this teaching. They wanted to hear him again.

As a follower of the risen Christ... and as one who lives for Christ and speaks boldly of him, expect to be the center of controversy. Especially in our scientific day and age, the concept of a literal resurrection from the dead makes people scoff. Some will think you’re stuck in the Middle Ages and that you lack critical thinking skills... that you follow the crowd and don’t think for yourself. When (not if, when) that happens to you in your life, smile. Smile with great pleasure knowing that you are scoffed at and mocked just as your Savior Jesus was. If you are the center of some controversy because of your faith and obedient lifestyle, well... good! That’s the way Jesus said it would be. In this world we will bear a cross for being associated with the risen Christ. But as we see in the next couple parts, we await the glory which will be ours. Meanwhile, as we live here on earth: **Christ’s resurrection means we will be controversial.**

#### Hymn #452, v.1-2 “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

#### PT 6: CHRIST’S RESURRECTION MEANS WE HAVE HOPE

The words we’re about to read, Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering under great persecution. They were discouraged. They were worn out. They were frazzled and just plain tired as they began to lose hope. Ever felt that way? Listen to these words of hope from the apostle:

**1 Peter 1:3-9** **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!** [Really? Praise be? We’re not feeling much like praising! But here’s why] **In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance** [he’s talking about heaven] **that can never perish, spoil or fade** [not like the stuff of this earth that does perish spoil and fade] **—kept in heaven for you** [so no one can steal it from you], **who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time** [the very power of God almighty is protecting you no matter what grief you suffer here... he’ll keep you in the faith until your salvation is complete!]. **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.** [Joy in spite of circumstances. Joy even as you suffer grief.]

**These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

Christ's resurrection means we have hope. Hymn #160 "This Joyful Eastertide"

**PT 7: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS WE WILL HAVE A NEW BODY**

I'm 42 and I already feel like my body is wearing out. Having made that statement, I know I will get absolutely NO sympathy from those of you who are older than 42. And from those of you younger than 42, I don't expect you to understand. Our bodies aren't perfect. They don't look like we want. They don't do what we want. They get sick. They wear out. They develop aches and pains. And in spite of modern medicine, they're not going to get better... not in the long run. They're going to quit working. We're going to die.

But listen to this bit of good news from Paul:

**Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

You're not stuck with that broken body of yours! When Christ returns on the last day, he will raise your actual physical body back to life... or if you are alive when he comes, he will transform it... and it will be glorious. Perfect. No flaws, defects, aches or pains. Body and soul you will live in perfection in God's immediate presence forever! Christ's resurrection means we will have a new body.

From these seven lessons from God's Word today, I pray that you truly have heard this truth loud and clear: **Christ's resurrection truly does change everything!**

Sadness? No, gladness!

Broken promises? None. All are kept!

Confusion? No clarity and purpose!

Hopelessness? Never! We have all hope and confidence!

Loneliness? He will never leave us or forsake us!

Lack of direction? He guides us all the way!

Continued guilt? It's gone forever, guaranteed because Christ died and now is risen.

Our risen Savior is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! **Amen Hymn #167, v.4-5 "Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense"**