

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

Today is the holiest day of the church. Today we celebrate the one key event that the entire Christian faith hinges upon. Today we remember and celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ lives. After his death on the cross, death could not keep hold of him. On the third day, his body returned to life and he exited the tomb that held him. Because of Jesus glorious resurrection, God announces his universal policy for the Christian church: **Satisfaction guaranteed!**

“100% satisfaction guaranteed. We stand behind everything we sell. If at any time our product doesn't meet your expectations, you can return it for a replacement or refund.” This is a quote from a popular outdoor outfitter, but it sounds familiar, doesn't it? Similar guarantees are offered by most companies today. American consumers are eternal skeptics that products will live up to their expectations. To alleviate our fears, the 100% satisfaction guaranteed is offered.

Did you know the Christian church comes with a 100% satisfaction guaranteed policy? Now, that doesn't mean that if at the end of the worship service today we will have your offering fully refunded. And the only reason is that your offering is not in any way a payment for service. What you receive today doesn't come from us, it comes from God. And what you offer today isn't given to us, it's given to God.

So then, what exactly does it mean in the church: satisfaction guaranteed? To explain that, let me first of all define the word “satisfaction.” It actually has two meanings, and both apply here.

- 1) The fulfillment or gratification of a desire, need, or appetite. This is the more common definition of the word. When a company says your satisfaction is guaranteed, they mean their product will indeed satisfy the desire, need or appetite that they claim it will satisfy.
- 2) Compensation for injury or loss; reparation. “We were unable to get satisfaction from the newspaper guy who broke our screen door.” We still have this used in the English language but it seems to be passing away. But along these lines the word is used in theology to describe “the atonement for sin by the death of Christ.” God the Father received satisfaction for sin through the death of his Son.”

So with both definitions in mind, let's see how at Easter, the policy is: Satisfaction guaranteed!

First, let's consider this: on our own we fail to satisfy God. We don't meet his expectations. People all around us have expectations of us, so it's easy to understand that God does too. We frequently fail to meet the expectations of others. How often have you failed to satisfy your spouse by not spending enough time with them... or doing something they asked you to do? Children, how often have you failed to satisfy your parents by not doing what you were told, or by doing a job poorly? Have you ever not satisfied your teacher? Those of you who have gainful employment, have you ever failed to satisfy your bosses expectations? Or your co-worker's? Have you ever let down a friend that was counting on you? We know what it's like not to satisfy others. In fact, we know what it's like not to satisfy ourselves. How often does it happen that you don't meet your own expectations?

In view of all of this, I don't think it's going to shock anyone too much that we haven't met God's expectations, and so he is not satisfied with us either. But what might shock you is to know how God's expectations are startlingly high, and how far short you are of meeting them. “Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy” he said in the Old Testament. And lest we think his New

Testament standards have eased a bit, Jesus said, “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

We like to assure ourselves that we’re pretty good people. In fact, I bet there’s some aspect of your life that you are quite proud of. Maybe you’re the kind of person who’s in church every weekend. Maybe you’re good with kids. Maybe you’re the kind of person that stops to help a person changing a flat tire. Maybe you occasionally volunteer at a soup kitchen. Maybe you regularly give to humanitarian organizations. Maybe you excel at your job. Maybe you’re a great parent. Most of us can pretty easily identify a part of our life we’re proud of. And deep down inside, we would like to think that God is impressed too.

But God doesn’t say, “Excel at something! Be better at something than most others!” No, he says, “Be perfect!” In every area of your life, all the time, in thought, word and action, in every way be perfect. Are you? Me neither.

But don’t let that fact comfort you. God is not understanding of the human condition, like you might think. By that, I mean that we excuse our sin by saying “everyone does it.” But God most certainly does not. God ultimately singles out each of us and says, “The soul that sins, it shall die!”

Is God satisfied with our morality? Our goodness? Our efforts? Not remotely. And his anger over our sin means we deserve severe punishment.

So listen, I know this is a downer to hear this on Easter Sunday morning and all. But it’s the truth, so I have to share it. God is just and holy, and so part of his very being is the obligation to punish disobedience. To let guilty sinners go off scott free would violate God’s very nature. It would not let God continue to be who he is. That’s not good news, but it’s the truth.

But listen: justice and holiness are not the only characteristics of our God. Love, mercy and compassion define him too. In fact, these are his predominant characteristics! God knows you. God loves you. And he desperately wants you to be close to him, to know him and to live with him forever.

So how can his justice be reconciled with his love? The answer is in our text for today, Isaiah 53:10-12. Some of you are guests today, so you don’t know that we’ve been going through Isaiah 53 during the last month and a half, looking at this detailed prophecy about Jesus written 700 years before he was born. Isaiah knew exactly what he would do to satisfy the justice of God. Here’s what he wrote:

“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him [the suffering servant; Jesus Christ] and cause him to suffer, and ... the Lord makes his life an offering for sin.

It’s as if Isaiah wrote about Jesus after his work of salvation was complete. It was the Lord’s will to crush his Son instead of crushing us for our sin. He suffered so we would not have to suffer under the wrath of God for eternity. Isn’t this great news? As good as this sounds, I’ve heard people object to this saying, “It’s not fair that God punished his Son instead of us! How cruel and heartless!” But remember that Jesus willingly went the way of the cross. He volunteered for this position in love for us. He wasn’t forced to do anything he didn’t want to do. The Father and the Son loved us with an everlasting love so that Jesus would be crushed and would suffer instead of us.

What is this saying? Christ satisfied the Father on our behalf! And he satisfied the Father in both meanings of the word. “Compensation for injury or loss; reparation.” Our sins have injured God. Because of our sins, we have a debt before God that can never be repaid. And because of Jesus, the injury has been compensated. The loss has been covered. Full reparation has been made. The father has gotten full satisfaction for every one of your sins.

And the other definition: “The fulfillment or gratification of a desire, need, or appetite.” There’s a passage that tells us of God’s desire and need: “God wants /desires / needs/ all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. God’s desire for our salvation is met in Christ Jesus. All who believe in him are forgiven their sin debt in full. God is fully satisfied with the

sacrifice of his Son for the sins of the world!

The reading continues and shows us how both Jesus and the Father were fully satisfied.

and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The Lord God made his Son, Jesus, an offering for sin. Jesus made full payment in order to satisfy the justice of God. That payment is absolutely enormous... truly beyond our comprehension. Did Jesus pay for it all? Or might there be some payment left for us to make? Will we be in for a rude awakening at the moment of our death? Will God the Father say, "Well, my son covered some of your sin-debt, but unfortunately, not all. You still owe me. And the punishment will still be great!"

No, we know the payment was complete. Isaiah the prophet knew the payment would be complete. The resurrection is prophesied when he says, **"He will prolong his days. He will see the light of life and be satisfied. I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong."** Because Jesus was victorious over our greatest enemies and fully accomplished everything the Father sent him to do, he was raised from the dead on the third day. God rewarded his faithful Son who paid for the sins of the world by giving him a portion among the great. He received the spoils of war, namely life, glory, majesty and all authority at the right hand of the Father for all eternity.

Certainly Jesus was fully satisfied with the salvation he won for us, for he lives and receives honor and glory and praise from us this day for his great work.

The Father is fully satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus is fully satisfied with his completed work. And that means, brothers and sisters, that you and I are fully satisfied as well.

Can you imagine what would have happened if the women went to the tomb that morning and Jesus' body was still in the grave. "Who will roll the stone away?" They get to the tomb and the soldiers guarding his body are still there. "Halt! No one shall take his body!" "No, we're just here to give him a proper burial. You can carefully watch and make sure we don't take him!" The strong guards move the rock for the women. They enter, and break down in tears at the site of Jesus' bloody, broken body. They painstakingly rewrap the body with the traditional spices, crying, remembering his life. At the end, the guards roll the large stone back in place. Rock scrapes on rock until it falls back in groove.

If that was the story, friends, we would simply not be here today. If Christ's body remained in that tomb, that means he was a liar, not the Son of God. It means his payment for sin was a sham... or at best incomplete. It means that when our bodies die, they will stay dead, and we will fall under the wrath of the living God for all our countless sins.

But that's not how the story unfolded, is it? The women arrive at the tomb, and the guards were no where to be seen. They had fled in fright when an earthquake shook the ground at Christ's resurrection. The stone was no longer covering the tomb... it had been tossed aside. When they entered the open tomb, an angel greeted them. **"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."**

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The proof and the guarantee that he truly is the Son of God

from eternity who became man to save us from our sins. It means that when he shouted from the cross, "It is finished!" the payment for our sin truly was paid in full! It means that when we die we will meet God face to face and he will be smiling with a huge smile as he give us a warm hug and welcomes us into his eternal presence. And because Jesus' physical body came back to live we have the guarantee that our physical bodies will also rise and live again, glorified, perfect, and ready for paradise.

Yes, dear friends, your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed because Jesus is risen, he is risen indeed! In fact, his resurrection gives us a triple guarantee. The Father is fully satisfied with the work of his Son. Christ now sees the fruits of his labor, you and me, and is fully satisfied. We are joyously satisfied on this Easter day for the salvation that Christ has brought us! He is risen. He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Amen.