

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in the Name of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is Risen. *He is risen indeed, alleluia!* Christ is risen is also the title for today's sermon based on the Epistle reading; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26. Let us pray.... Amen!

Christ is Risen! *He is risen indeed, alleluia!* Every year I get tingles down my spine when I hear those absolutely spectacular words. To hear the words the angel proclaimed to the women gathered at Jesus' tomb that first Easter morning, "Why do you seek the LIVING among the dead? He IS NOT here, but HAS RISEN. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." (Lk 24:5b-7)

Christ is risen!

This news is mind blowing, and salvation securing. These words are life to all who believe.

Our Lord and Saviour, whose death we gathered in remembrance of just three days ago, when we were reminded of how Jesus took on Himself the full punishment for the sins of the entire world, including yours and mine. He was beaten, flogged, and nailed to a God forsaken tree. There, in full view of all who passed by, Jesus bled and gave His life in death for you, me, and all people. To ensure Jesus really died one soldier thrust a spear through His side, and piercing His heart, blood and water poured out. God in the flesh died for your sins on that cross.

BUT, but HE DID NOT STAY DEAD! Nothing in all of creation could keep Jesus in the ground. He ROSE! He conquered death. The proof is in the bare cross and the empty tomb. Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead.

These three words; 'Christ is risen', are the most special and important words you will ever hear, because they are the words of eternal life. They reveal your Saviour, His life of carrying your sins, His death to pay for your sins, and His resurrection. Together they clearly proclaim God has accepted Christ's full payment for you and He has reconciled you back to God. As such you are delivered from death and given new and eternal life in Christ. You are marked with God's own name; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit both upon your forehead and your heart as one redeemed by Christ and sharing in His eternal life.

These three words; 'Christ is risen', give incredible comfort, mainly after nearly a month and a half of intense reflection on the seriousness and consequences of our sin during the season of Lent. In Lent we see exactly why Jesus came, to save us sinner. Through those 40 days we also remembered His progress towards Jerusalem, and ultimately the cross. As He took each step, bearing the full weight of each and every sin, even those not yet committed, His eyes were firmly set on His goal; to take the eternal and divine punishment we deserve on Himself and then rise on the third day. This He did, and apart from His work of salvation we would be eternally dead and damned in and because of our sin. Yet today, on Easter Sunday, we hear the great and phenomenal news; Jesus is successful; Christ's work is complete. Death is vanquished. How? Christ is Risen FOR YOU and me! Alleluia! Shout it out, it is finished, we are reconciled back to God. God has accepted Christ's work in our place, and now in faith we too share in Jesus' eternal life. Alleluia!

Why, because Jesus rose from the dead. His tomb is empty. Alleluia!

Yet, from that first glorious Easter morning there have been some who would like for us to take our eyes off, and out, of the empty tomb. The Chief priests and elders paid off the soldiers who had witnessed the angel remove the stone and convinced them to say Jesus' disciples stole His body by night.

That excuse for the empty tomb could be plausible EXCEPT THAT for the next forty days Jesus kept showing up in different places very alive and well and He talked to various people and groups, including one with more than 500 brothers at the same time. At the same time, you can be sure that the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and elders were scouring Jerusalem and the entire area for the missing body of Jesus. Had they found it, Jesus' dead body would have been paraded up and down the streets with proclamations that He was still dead, but no such procession ever occurred because they never found Him, at least not in this life but they will. The reason they never found Jesus' body is because they were looking for someone dead. Yet Jesus was very much alive having been raised from the dead and glorified by the Father.

But they are not the only ones to deny reject Jesus' death, and even more His resurrection. People continue to even today. There are a number of reasons. I've heard many comments from those who do not believe in Christ who say such things as 'It is nothing but foolishness' or 'People who die—those who really die—stay dead; there is no such thing as a resurrection' or, 'Christ didn't do any of that, Paul fabricated and taught a different Christianity than what Jesus, Peter and James taught', to one of my least favorite by a university professor who said to a student; 'give up on those fairy tales. Come talk to me when you want to learn the truth'. This is understandable for those who do not have faith, as Paul tells the Corinthian Church, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."(1 Cor 1:21-25)

Yet, a strange thing is happening in the world today-it is not only the unbelievers, the non-Christians who deny Jesus' resurrection, and it completely befuddles me as to why. I have stood shocked, astounded, and almost speechless when I've heard some who claim to be Christian deny Christ physically and truly rose from the dead. They say Jesus resurrection is not important. Yet, by denying Jesus resurrection, one denies the entire New Testament; the Gospels, the Epistles, the Pastoral letters, Revelation, everything. On top of that they reject the only hope of our salvation which comes in three words; 'Christ is Risen'.

Yet this is nothing new. Paul faced the same problem in Corinth. He told them, and us, leading into our reading began "... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."(1 Cor

15:17). // If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then we are to be most pitied, and those who have died believing and trusting in Christ for salvation, if He didn't rise, they, along with us are still condemned by our sins. ¹⁹"If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied"(1Cor 15:19).

Let me be gravely serious and absolutely clear.

- If Jesus did not rise from the dead there is no salvation.
- If Jesus did not really and truly physically rise from the dead then this is all a sham, we are gathered together still under the Law, without any hope for grace.
- If Christ did not rise on the third day, as He said He would, and as Scripture said He did, all this is all a lie, The Bible is a lie, and Jesus is a liar, a fraud, a charlatan.
- If Jesus did not really rise we ought to turn off the lights, sell the building, lower our heads in shame, and cower in fear at the eternal wrath of God we would have to face for our sinfulness.
- If Jesus didn't really rise from the dead you are still in the death of your sins and you have no hope of forgiveness or everlasting life.

Fortunately Paul continues proclaiming the Truth and the most excellent news. He says "But *the historical fact is* Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"(1 Cor 20-22). Jesus did really and truly physically rise. It is as much, if not more historically verifiable than any other event before the dawn of the printing press, and in many cases even before the 1900's. I could talk for hours about the evidence, but don't just take my word for it here, come talk to me after service, or anytime. Yet, the most clear evidence is God's own Word recorded for us in the inspired word of the Bible.

Jesus' death destroyed death and gives eternal life to all who believe and trust in Him. What better news could there ever be, your eternal salvation is sealed in the physical resurrection of Christ our Lord and God from the dead. This is why Peter went home marveling after seeing the empty tomb. His crucified Lord and Saviour ROSE just as He said He would! And because Jesus rose, we too will share with all who have God-given faith in Christ' resurrection when He returns in glory. Though this body will die, well unless Christ returns first, it will not stay dead. On the Last Day, when Jesus returns, He will raise these bones, He will restore this body, and every body asleep in the ground. We will share in His resurrection from the dead: Those in faith to everlasting life with God; those without faith to everlasting condemnation.

Rejoice in Jesus' resurrection from, and victory over death! Alleluia! Thank God Jesus rose. Rejoice this and every day in your salvation in Christ. Your sins are forgiven, you have eternal life in Christ. Because Christ is risen you have been delivered from death to rise to everlasting life in Him! So, when you hear those three beautiful life giving words shout out with the same enthusiasm as if your team just won the Grey Cup in overtime. Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed. ALLELUIA!* Amen!