

He Has Risen

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[0:00] Hello, everyone. We're going to start by reading two passages from the Bible. The first one is from Matthew 28, and the second one will be 1 Corinthians 15.

! Now, after the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes white as snow. And for the fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, 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. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him.

[1:30] See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb, and with fear and great joy ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings.

And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.

And the second reading then, 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 22, on page 961.

Now, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

[2:47] Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, so you believed. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

[3:53] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are all of people most to be pitied.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. Amen. Amen. He has risen.

[5:00] Those are the three words I want to focus on this morning. And I know, zero points for originality, because of course, today is Easter Sunday, the day where Christians around the world traditionally remember the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

But I won't apologize too much for this, because these are three groundbreaking words, life-changing words of cosmic significance.

Now, there are many sayings or mottos in life, sayings which are designed to make us feel good, or to communicate something, or to help us remember something of importance.

So, for example, L'Oreal. Their tagline is, because I'm worth it. McDonald's? I'm loving it.

Scott Rail? See it, say it. Sorted. Sorted. Nike? Just do it. And all of these things might well be good and true, but they are nothing in comparison to this saying, he has risen.

[6:16] So, what I'd like to do this morning, on one hand, is very simple. I just want to take about 20 minutes to talk about the Easter message, to celebrate it, to explore it, to ask some questions of it.

And as we do this, I want to offer you these three words. He has risen as a motto for your life. So, let's go for it.

We're just going to do one word at a time. And the first word is, he. Who is he? Who are we talking about?

Now, even if you're not a regular in church, you very likely know that we're talking about Jesus. The Jesus who lived some 2,000 years ago, who was crucified, died, and was buried, only to rise again on the third day, the very first Easter Sunday.

And that's miraculous, isn't it? But you could say, that's cool, good for him, good for you, but what does it matter to me?

[7:24] Well, in 2023, Jeremy Renner, so the actor who, amongst other things, plays Hawkeye in the Avengers movies, he was critically injured in a snowplow accident.

And on his way to hospital in the ambulance, he was declared dead. Now, thanks to the work of the paramedics, and thanks to the grace of God, he was resuscitated.

And that's miraculous too. But we don't celebrate Jeremy Renner at Easter time, so what's the difference? Well, Mr. Renner is a lucky man who had an accident.

Whereas Jesus, while also a man, is God himself, whose death and resurrection was very intentional, to save you from sin, and to save you to a new life.

The Easter story is really a climax to a much bigger story, a story as old as time itself. And we're not going to go back to the beginning today, but it's enough to say this, that the Bible tells us that the root problem and the biggest danger that we face in life is sin.

[8:41] And the Easter story is the resolution and the rescue from that danger. It's sin in our hearts that causes the selfishness and pride that rejects God and his place in our lives.

It's sin that feeds the greed and ego that results in inequality and poverty and war. And it's sin which blinds us to the truth that this life and this world that we live in isn't all it's meant to be.

Each time I stand up to try and communicate the essence of sin in two sentences or less, I often think, just look around you.

Just look at the news and tell me there's not something wrong with the world. Something off. Tell me there's not something wrong with humanity. And each time I say that, it seems more and more applicable.

So who has the answer to all of this suffering and pain and death that we experience through life?

[9:57] Does Jeremy Renner? No. Here's a more serious suggestion. What about the God or the Prophet of Islam? Or the Buddha and the Four Noble Truths?

Or what about the great God of science? Do any of these have the answer to the pains and sufferings of life? See, it's not quite so easy just to say no to that.

Because science is given as medicine which alleviates pain and suffering. And there are many kind, generous Muslims and Buddhists who, as a result of their faith, do essential work in the community. Feeding the hungry, helping the poor, housing the homeless. But can the teachings of Islam or Buddhism or science, can they save us from the root cause of the brokenness of life?

Can they save us from our sin? No. Because there never has been and there never will be someone more qualified than Jesus to pay the price for our sin, to take it upon themselves and to then emerge triumphant.

[11:21] Because Jesus is the only one who came from heaven, God in the flesh. He's the only person to have lived a perfect, sinless, human life, fulfilling the law and the prophets.

He's the only one qualified to offer himself as the perfect, sinless sacrifice, to offer himself up on the cross to bear the cost of a disobedient, rebellious, sinful people.

and he's the only one who's risen from the dead conquering the final power of sin and death. The Bible tells us in Romans that the wages of sin is death.

That is, if we're apart from Jesus, that's what's due to us. That's what we've earned. But it goes on, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But if we're with Jesus, the wages of sin don't get paid to us. They're paid to him. Instead, we're offered eternal life.

[12:34] So, Jesus suffered and died on the cross to win us freedom from sin and then rose again three days later to offer us freedom to a new life.

This is why we celebrate Jesus at Easter time. Because he has risen. Which brings us to our second word today.

Has. He has risen. Now, I don't know if many people would deny that what I've just been speaking about sounds appealing. You know, forgiveness of sins, healing of a broken world, everlasting life. you might not necessarily agree with anything I've just said, but it sounds good, doesn't it? You know, sometimes I think the main question people might have is not so much is it a good thing or is it desirable so much as that is it true?

Has he risen or hasn't he? Is he alive or isn't he? So I wanted to take a few minutes, which is not enough time, but just a few minutes to approach this question of truth.

[13:52] Because through faith in Jesus we're offered a gift, a gift of freedom, freedom from sin. So that's what's on the table, a gift.

And you don't have to earn this through your goodness. I mean, you can't. It's a gift. You can't earn it. And it doesn't matter who you are. There's nothing that disqualifies you from receiving it.

So no amount of badness or unlovableness or unworthiness, it doesn't matter what you've done.

Jesus offers you this gift. All you have to do is respond by either accepting it or declining it.

You might be surprised to know that the Bible poses this very question. In 1 Corinthians 15, which we read, it says, verse 17, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

You are still in your sins. In other words, if the resurrection isn't true, we are all wasting our time here. So I want to point to three lines of evidence to make the case.

[15:07] Historical evidence, social evidence, and personal evidence.

Historically, it's parts of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 which give us some of the most compelling evidence for the truth of the resurrection.

Verses 3 to 8, which we read earlier, are identified by historians as being an early church creed, so a summary of early church, early Christian belief.

And this is dated back to around about A.D. 32 to 38. So within two to eight years of the resurrection, these words were written. And I'm going to read it again, just briefly.

Verse 3, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. So this is the apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth in Greece, and he's saying, I gave you these facts that I researched and that I was told about and that I experienced myself.

And here's what they were. That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

[16:31] Then he appeared to James, then to all of the apostles. So Paul lists all these people who Jesus appeared to, to Cephas, that's Peter, to the twelve, to the five hundred, many of whom are still alive.

Remember, this was written about two to eight years after the resurrection. So Paul is basically saying, if you want proof, go and ask.

here's a list of people you can go and interview. And then he says, last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me. Paul's untimely birth refers to his conversion from a hard-line skeptic who was persecuting the church to a believer devoted to following Jesus.

He says, he even appeared to me as unworthy as I am. So the death and resurrection of Jesus, it checks out historically.

And there's so much more historical evidence too, but as we haven't got the time, I want to mention just briefly two other aspects. The social evidence.

[17:47] We shouldn't forget that as we read the Bible, as we read these accounts, that these people are real people, people with real anxiety and real fears and the same range of emotions that we have.

So some of them would have found it easier to believe in the resurrection and some of them would have found it a bit more difficult. But as you read the biblical accounts and the many accounts of the appearances of Jesus through the book of Acts, what becomes clear is how utterly united and convinced they were in the truth that he has risen.

And it was this truth that motivated them to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming this. So without any real payoff in human terms, they devoted themselves to this.

They faced a life of hardship. They often went without food, without houses. They were ridicules, beaten, imprisoned, and many of them came to their end by brutal execution.

them. Why would they do this? Because what they thought Jesus had taught was morally worthwhile? Now, that would be madness, wouldn't it?

[19:09] They proclaimed the resurrection because they were convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead.

God. And, you know, sure, people will die for their religious convictions. We've seen that throughout history, sometimes in the most evil of ways.

But here's the difference between a religious fanatic and the earliest Christians. Religious fanatics may strongly believe in their religion.

religion. However, they don't know for a fact whether their faith is based on the truth or not.

Whereas the earliest Christians had actually seen Jesus alive after his death.

they didn't just believe in the resurrection. They knew it was true. Nobody dies for something that they know is false.

[20:16] They proclaimed the resurrection to their deaths for one reason only. He has risen. And it's this same good news that was proclaimed over 2,000 years ago.

The same gospel that has saved millions, billions, that has made it to Crow Road, to this room right here today in 2026.

And I'm here as a result of that. So my last little bit of evidence then is me, is personal evidence. evidence. And indeed, all of you sitting here today as well, who know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you're the evidence too.

But as I'm the one that's speaking for another few minutes, allow me to use myself as an example. I grew up in a Christian house, so my mum and my dad were both at the time believers.

And so I went to church, not necessarily by choice, but I went to church up until my early teens when I stopped. I'd reached an age where I really had to think for myself and I really wasn't at that stage.

[21:35] Christianity wasn't for me. I don't think I really believed. I didn't know it was true and I certainly didn't think it was a worthwhile use of my time.

But throughout the next ten years or so, there was a nagging, a niggle in the back of my head, an uneasiness or a dissatisfaction.

And although I wouldn't have called it this at the time, it was a longing for something that life couldn't fulfill. And it wasn't until I stopped avoiding Jesus and accepted that, yes, he died for me. And yes, I owe my life to God. But things started to make sense. And you could say, good, that's super for you.

But how do I know that I'm not one of those religious fanatics that I was talking about earlier? Maybe I am. But let me say this.

[22:45] Historically, the facts of Christianity make sense of the world that I see around about me. Socially, I've seen the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God change people's lives.

And personally, through the ups and downs of life, through my many failures, the truth of Jesus' resurrection gives me a peace that really surpasses all understanding.

Why? Because he has risen. And so, just for the last minute or two then, that last word, risen. Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus appeared multiple times to his disciples and prepared them for their mission ahead. Their mission to spread the good news of his death and his resurrection, to tell people of the freedom from sin and the freedom to a new life that was available.

Jesus then ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, ruling over all, praying for you and for me and watching out for us.

[24:05] He has risen and he is risen. risen. And that's the truth that we must hold on to. At the beginning, I said I wanted to offer these three words, he has risen, as a motto for your life.

As a saying or a truth which we can hold on to through the good times and the bad times, through the ups and the downs, through the thick and the thin. Can you see now why that would be a good thing?

why I want to offer that motto for you? Because in times of celebration and happiness, we can rejoice and say he has risen.

In times of sadness and loss, we can mourn and say, but he has risen. In uncertainty, we can hold on to the fact that he has risen.

In our anxiety, he has risen. In our sickness, he has risen. In our disappointment, he has risen.

Fear, he has risen. When faced with death, he has risen.

[25:19] So I can rise too. Through faith in Jesus, just as he was raised from the dead, so too we can be raised to newness of life.

Both now, in this world, in this world, in this world, in this world, in this world, so a newness of life with a new hope and a new perspective and a new meaning, but also later, in the next world, after death, an everlasting life in the presence of God, forgiven of sin, living in harmony with each other, with ourselves, and with God, in a place where there's no more pain and no more suffering, only joy and happiness.

What an awesome gift of God. What a love Jesus has for you. He has risen.

Thank you. We're going to sing a last song for today. Come, people of the Risen King. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[28:04] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. May the joy of the resurrection fill your hearts today and always. Amen.