

Easter Sunday: The Risen Christ Changes Everything

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[0:00] They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear.

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus Christ is alive. He lives forevermore. Can we get an hallelujah? Hallelujah! Amen. Feels good to get that out, doesn't it? Jesus Christ is risen from the grave, and death is defeated. Praise the living God.

So, here we are. Easter Sunday. We came early to chug our coffee. Thanks be to God. And to eat our danishes.

[1:19] Our Easter plans are in place. Many of the ladies are in their Easter hats. And they're looking lovely ladies. We're having a celebration for sure.

But let's stop and consider this. We are remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To put it in other words. We are celebrating the most important events in the history of the world. In the history of the universe. We are celebrating the day when as the Egyptians fled at the Exodus. The devil and death flee because God has delivered us. Amen. So let's let that sink in for a minute. It's a big day, is it not?

As Christians, we are remembering what our whole faith hinges on. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain and you are still in your sins.

[2:28] But you know what? Today, we proclaim with joy. Today, we proclaim with a hope that nothing in this world can destroy. Today, we proclaim victoriously.

Jesus Christ has been raised. And we are set free from our sins. Set free from death. Set free to have life. To have it abundantly and to have it forever.

Alleluia. This day, in Syracuse, New York. In Nairobi, Kenya. In Seoul, South Korea. In Sydney, Australia.

In Cairo, Egypt. In places all over the world. The church gathers and shouts with one joyful voice. Jesus Christ is risen. The news of that empty tomb.

The empty tomb of our risen Savior. Started in Jerusalem. And now it is spread to the whole world. That news. The good news. The gospel. First proclaimed almost 2,000 years ago.

[3:31] On the other side of the world. From us. And here we are. In AD 2017. In Syracuse, New York. We are celebrating that very message.

A message that from our vantage point. Looks ancient. But isn't it a message that is always new. And always fresh. Haven't you found that to be true in your lives?

I know I have. What we announce today. What we celebrate today. Is what we find the Apostle Peter preaching. So long ago.

In our New Testament reading. For this morning. From Acts 10. That the Son of God. The Lord Jesus. Was put to death. By being nailed to a cross. That God raised him from the dead.

In three days. That he then appeared to many witnesses. And instructed his disciples. To go out and tell everyone. Everywhere. That he. Jesus. Is the Father's chosen Savior.

[4:29] And the judge of the whole world. And that everyone who believes in him. Receives forgiveness of sins. Through his name. Nearly 2,000 years later.

Why does that message still resonate? Why does it resonate in Syracuse? In small villages in Nigeria? In ancient cities in the Middle East?

I think the answer is pretty simple. It changes lives. And it changes everything. The answer is that. In every time. And in every place.

In all the world. The gospel is the power of God. Unto salvation. To everyone who believes. It's the power of God.

Unto salvation. It's the promise. Of the full and free forgiveness. Of our sins. Through Christ's death for us. It's the promise. Of the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 25] Given to believers. The Spirit who changes us. From the inside out. Changing our lives. Changing our hearts. And healing our brokenness. It is the promise. Of eternal life.

Because Jesus is risen. He has destroyed death. So that everyone who believes in him. Will have eternal life. And joy that will never end. So we find.

Our every joy. We find the deepest desires. Of our hearts. We place our every hope. In this crucified and risen one. And we treasure the message.

Of what he has done for us. Above everything. If the gospel is true. If Jesus is really raised from the dead. And he is.

What can compare to that? And. Certainly not the stuff. And the wealth. That we can spend our lives accumulating. Stuff that we will never take with us.

[6 : 22] Beyond the grave. Not our ambitions. Or our pride. And our own accomplishments. Because let's be real. Virtually no one will remember. Any of us gathered here.

This morning. And a hundred years from now. And not even the best plans. We make for our own lives. Because those so often. Fall apart. And leave us broken. And disappointed.

But if Jesus. Is risen from the dead. And we put our trust in him. He promises. That he is preparing for us. Even now. Perfect joy.

That will last forever. He promises. That even if we die. We will never perish. But we'll have everlasting life. He promises us. That his plans for us are good.

That no eye has seen. Nor ear heard. Nor the heart of man imagined. What God has prepared. For those who love him. What God has planned. For those who love him.

[7 : 20] Those who believe. In the risen Lord. Is so much greater. Than anything. We can even imagine. Do you believe that this morning? Yes.

This is true. And it is. Then shouldn't we recognize it? Shouldn't we celebrate it? It's the greatest treasure. Of our lives. Now the apostles.

Who saw. The risen Jesus. Certainly thought so. They rushed out. To spread the word. They went out. In obedience. To the risen Christ. Who told them. To make disciples.

Of all nations. They went out. Preaching that message. That we heard Peter. Preaching. In our reading. From Acts 10. For this morning. They had seen. The risen Jesus.

With their own eyes. They realized. That his resurrection. Changed everything. That his death. And resurrection. Was the most important message.

[8 : 15] In the whole world. And they were willing. To risk anything. And everything. To live their lives. For the risen Jesus. And to tell others. About him. So that others.

Would hear him. Be saved. And it wasn't long. Before the apostles. And others. Who believed. The gospel message.

Of the death. And resurrection. Of Jesus. Ran into trouble. Stephen. The first Christian martyr. Was preaching that message. It made those. Who heard him.

So angry. That they beat him. To death with stones. And yet. The disciples of Jesus. Kept preaching that message. Didn't they? The apostle Peter.

Would preach that message. Until he was crucified. For preaching that message. The apostle Paul. Would preach that message. Until he too. Was killed for preaching that message.

[9 : 09] Now I have to say. These folks got it. They got that the resurrection. Of Jesus. Changes everything. The apostle Paul said. When he was facing.

The possibility. Of his own death. To live is Christ. To die is gain. Now those. Are the words of a man. Who understood. That knowing Jesus.

Is the most important. And most precious thing. In the entire world. Those are the words. Of a man. Who knew that he did not. Have to be afraid. Even to die.

For his faith in Jesus. Because he knew. That his sins. Were forgiven. Through the work of Christ. On the cross. Because he knew. That Jesus is risen. And that the resurrection.

Of Jesus. Guarantees. That those. Who believe in Christ. Will never die. Now. Their opponents. Those who beat them. Who stoned them.

[10:04] Who crucified them. Who beheaded them. Who imprisoned them. For preaching that message. They got it too. They got. That the message.

Of Jesus crucified. And risen. Changed everything. Some of them realized. That if. If it's true. That Jesus rose. From the dead.

It meant. That there. Their religious claims. Were false. Some of those. In authority. Realized. That those. Who believe in Jesus. Place their commitment. And their allegiance.

To him. Over every other. Commitment. And allegiance. Even over their allegiance. To earthly nations. Or kings. Or empires. And they saw that. As a challenge. To their authority.

And it's true. If Jesus. Is risen. And he is. It is. It is the most. Important thing. That has ever. Happened.

[11:00] That is something. That is worth. Living for. And something. That is even worth. Dying for. Now. What does that. History lesson. About the persecution.

Of the early Christians. Have to do with us. Because that was all. A long time ago. Right. No. It's happening.

In our world. Again. Today. One week ago. Palm Sunday. Christians. All over the world. Including us. Gathered to do. What we're doing. This morning.

To worship. In two separate attacks. Churches in Egypt. Were bombed. By terrorists. And dozens of Christians. Were killed. On Easter Sunday. Last year.

There was a terrorist attack. In Pakistan. Targeting Christians. And again. Dozens were killed. In our world. Today. People are being imprisoned. By their governments. They're losing their homes.

[11:55] They're being beaten. They're being kidnapped. They're being bombed. They're being beheaded. Why? Because they know. That Jesus Christ.

Is alive. And that that means everything. That it's so important. That they won't say otherwise. Even to save their very lives. Now if that.

Were the end of the story. That would just be inexpressibly sad. But it's not. Because Jesus Christ is risen. So we have the guarantee. That everyone who puts their trust in him.

Even if they die. Will live forever. As Christians. We have a joy. We have a hope. We have a peace. That nothing in this world. Can take from us. And our brothers and sisters.

Are proving it. With their very lives. The incomparable worth. Of knowing Jesus. The incomparable promise. Of eternal joy. The incomparable assurance.

[12:54] That our sins. Are really forgiven. And Jesus. Is so great. That it is greater even. Than life itself. One way.

Or another. Sure you probably. Already know this. This life. Is going to end. The life. That we find. In the risen Jesus. Will never end.

And it is so precious. That it is worth everything. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now as at least. Some of you know. One of the Christians. I look up to most.

In our day. Is one of our Nigerian. Archbishops. Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi. Now. He is a man. Who has suffered. Terrorist violence. Threats to his life.

All because. He proclaims. The gospel. Of the crucified. And risen Jesus. He has had his church. Burn down. His family. Has been beaten.

[13:50] He has survived. Multiple attempts. On his life. And what is he up to? He is still proclaiming. The gospel. Of the risen Lord. What does he have to say.

About all of that? Certainly not. Woe is me. Here is what he says. One thing I know.

Until my time is up. And I know. I will die someday. Until that day. I have a gospel. To proclaim. I have a gospel. I have a gospel. Worth living for. And I have a gospel. Worth dying for.

Jesus. Is risen. It's worth living for. And it's worth dying for. It's worth living for. Because there is nothing greater. Than the joy and peace.

Of knowing Jesus. It's worth dying for. Because Jesus. In rising again. Has defeated death forever. And has become. The source of eternal salvation. For all who put their trust in him.

[14:47] Can anything take that joy from us. Can thieves break in and steal that joy. Can it rust. Can it decay. No. Jesus is risen.

And if we know him as our Lord and Savior. We have the promise that. No matter. What this life throws at us. We will never perish.

God. God. God. Who cannot lie. Has said so. And you know what? He proved it. When he raised Jesus from the dead. This is a message.

For all of us. This morning. No matter where we are. If you're hearing this message. And you don't know Jesus. As your Savior and Lord.

This message about the resurrection of Jesus. Is especially for you. Because the Bible says. That if you confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him from the dead.

[15 : 45] You will be saved. The offer. Of the gospel. The call. To confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him from the dead.

Goes out to you today. Doesn't matter. Where you are. How many mistakes you've made. How many burdens you're carrying. Doesn't matter. If you think you have to get your act together first. Because you don't. The offer goes out to you. Right now. Confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. Believe in your heart. That God raised him from the dead.

And you will be saved. Now you might ask. What about the mistakes? What about the sins in my life? Here's the amazing thing.

Ask God to forgive them. For Jesus' sake. For what he did on the cross. And he will. On the cross. Jesus paid for the sins of all who put their trust in him.

[16 : 44] And when we put our trust in Jesus. They are gone. Forever. So. The call goes out. To everyone this morning.

Put your trust. In the risen Jesus. If you do not know him. Receive today. The free gift of eternal life. And then prepare.

For an amazing life. Of following him. And obeying him as Lord. I promise you. It's worth living for. And it's worth dying for. Now for those of us.

Who are believers. I want to both. Encourage. And exhort us today. Remember. My brothers and sisters. This day.

The great joy and privilege. That is yours. We remember the cross. And we remember the empty tomb. The guilt and burden of your sins. Are nailed to the cross of Christ.

[17 : 40] They are put away forever. By his one perfect sacrifice. Of himself. Jesus has secured your salvation. And it is finished. And Jesus is risen.

Think for a second. About what that means for us. It means that all who are in him. Are raised with him. It means that to be absent from the body.

To be present with the Lord. It means that when he comes again in glory. Our bodies will be raised. Transformed. Changed.

Into perfect incorruptible bodies. Bodies that will never know pain. Will never know hurt. Will never know sickness. Will never know sadness. Sorrow. Or grief.

Ever. Again. It means. That God will dwell with us. We will be his people. And he will be our God. Forever.

[18 : 39] The resurrection of Jesus guarantees it. Brothers and sisters. Isn't that the most important news. In the whole world. Isn't that worth everything.

Doesn't everything else. Look worthless. In comparison. I urge. Each one of us. This morning. To live. As those who know.

There is nothing more precious. Than knowing the crucified. And risen savior. Are we doing that? Do we treat. Our walk. With the risen Lord. As the most important thing.

In our lives. As what we live for. As the most important thing. In the whole world. Or do we treat it as important. But not as important. As other things.

Do we treat it as important. But not as the most important thing. Do our families. Friends. Neighbors. Co-workers. Co-workers. Look at our lives.

[19 : 38] And see that we treasure Jesus. Above everything. Now on that note. I want to take a minute here. Especially to address those of us. Who are Christian parents. And grandparents.

Do our children. And our grandchildren. See that we treasure Jesus. Above everything else. Because our little ones. Are growing up. In a culture. That prizes.

Material success. Above everything else. Are we going to demonstrate. To them. That knowing Jesus. Is more important. They're growing up. In a culture. That doesn't.

Treasure Jesus. Above all other things. Are we going to show them. Another way. Are we going to show them. That knowing Jesus. Is greater than everything else.

And that serving him. Comes before every other. Commitment we have. If we want them. To grow up. As those who know.

[20 : 34] And love our risen Lord. The answer must be yes. And I'm not saying this. To beat us up. Or discourage us. I wouldn't want to do that.

Especially. Not on a day like today. A day of great joy. I'm saying this. Because if we're putting. Other things first. Before Christ. Before the risen Lord.

We are robbing ourselves. Of our Easter joy. We're putting our trust. In things that won't last. We're finding our joy. In things that will fade. And decay.

And that is a recipe. For heartbreak. But the promise. That is ours. In the gospel. In Christ crucified. And risen. That promise.

Will last forever. It will never disappoint us. It will never fail us. Why is that? Because neither death. Nor life. Nor angels. Nor rulers. Nor things present.

[21 : 29] Nor things to come. Nor powers. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor anything else. In all creation. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. In Christ Jesus.

Our Lord. Because we look. To the cross. And we see that as far as the east is from the west. So far as he removed our sins from us.

Because we look at the empty tomb. And we see that death is defeated. The devil is crushed. And that Christ lives and reigns forever.

And he promises. That we will reign with him. Because. The gospel. Is the power of God unto salvation.

To everyone who believes. So can we say. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory. Through our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 26] They put him to death. By hanging him on a tree. But God raised him. On the third day. And made him to appear. To him. All the prophets bear witness.

That everyone. Who believes in him. Receives forgiveness. Of sins. Through his name. Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed.

Alleluia.