

The Five Facts Of Easter

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[0 : 00] Your risen presence among us through your word in our fellowship and by your Holy Spirit. May your Holy Spirit bear witness to you among us as we bow our hearts to your word in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 to 4 page 189 in your pew Bible and I'd be grateful if you would turn there.

Father, this has been the most wonderful week in my life at St. John's. There has been so much come together and I feel so very blessed on this Easter morning and thankful for hundreds of things.

Which have all been in a sense after the manner of the woman who took the precious jar of ointment and broke it and anointed Jesus' feet.

And the aroma of it filled the house. And the aroma of the love of God in Christ has been wonderful this week. If you could just, I wish you could all have been here.

[1 : 24] I wish you could have been here at the three-hour service on Good Friday. When? Somebody from Singapore, somebody from Nigeria, somebody from Japan, somebody from Texas, and somebody from the Antipodes, which is a polite way of saying Australia, all share the good news that comes from the fact of Christ's death.

I would like you just to think to start with this morning about a befuddled disciple. And the befuddled disciple was one who heard Jesus come into Galilee and say, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Oh, and he said, Tell me about it. And so Jesus turned water into wine. Oh, isn't that wonderful? The kingdom of heaven is turning water into wine.

Jesus said, No, it isn't. That's just a sign. Then he fed 5,000 people with five loaves and three. The kingdom of heaven is about feeding all the hungry. No, it isn't. That's just a sign. Well, then he saw a man paralyzed, born into the presence of Christ, and the man got up and took his stretcher and walked away.

[2 : 54] Ah, that's what the kingdom of God is. Wonderful healing of our physical ailments. No, it isn't. That's just a sign. And then he saw Jesus in the ship, and the great storm swept across the sea, and they were in danger of being drowned, and Jesus commanded the storm to be stilled, and he said, Ah, yes, that's what the kingdom is, power over the ruthless elements of nature.

No, it isn't. That's just a sign. And then he went, Jesus went to Bethany, and there were two grieving sisters whose brother had died and was in the tomb, and Jesus felt their grief and wept himself at the tyranny of death.

And to meet the deep need of those sisters, he commanded their brother to come forth from the tomb, and he did.

And the disciples said, Yes, that's what the kingdom is about, to take away all our grief and sorrow and bereavement. No, it isn't. That's just a sign.

The disciple turned away and said, Well, if it's none of those things, what could it be? And then Jesus was arrested, and he was taken and tried and crucified, hung on a cross and put in a tomb.

[4 : 25] And despair filled the disciple, and he said, Ah, yes, that's what life is. You have wonderful expectations, and then they're all dashed and there's nothing.

But then on the third day, Jesus appeared to his disciples and showed them his hands and his side. He said, That's what the kingdom is about. God taking the dead and raising them to life to stand in his presence.

And that kingdom affects all of you. And you enter into that kingdom when you come to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Wonderful editor in the Globe and Mail yesterday. I don't know whether the guy who wrote it knew what he was saying, but he sure was helping me.

[5 : 31] And particularly on the exegesis of Colossians chapter 3, the heading of the article is, Forces that shape our destiny lie ignored beneath society's first forces.

And then he said, In just three days, the Son of God is betrayed, abused, killed, denied, before he is resurrected, promising forgiveness of sins.

Then he said about the culture and society that you and I belong to and are fed up with, I mean fed up to the gills with.

He said, Powerful conventions discourage examination of those realities which lie beneath the whole of our life.

And that's exactly what St. Paul said in Colossians chapter 3. He said, Look at it, if you will. And he gave them five statements by which they could look at it.

[6 : 44] One, Colossians chapter 1, verses 1 to 4. And he pointed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The commentary in the Globe and Mail said, Our society is not allowed according to powerful conventions to make any public direct declaration about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its meaning.

It's all right. We can do it here. So don't worry. We have that wonderful freedom. And I would like to do it here. And I'd like to just make the five statements.

And because time is very short today, I want you to take the statements and think them through.

These five statements come in Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 to 4.

The first of the statements is, Man, you are dead. That means you are disqualified. It means you are condemned.

[7 : 47] It means there is no hope for you in this world. Now, you may be spared a few years to enjoy a certain prosperity and a certain felicity and a certain fulfillment of some of your basic desires, but basically speaking, the reality is, as far as this world is concerned, and all that it has to offer, you're dead.

You are condemned because it leads nowhere. I'm not saying this to you.

I'm just telling you what St. Paul says. You're dead. The second thing he says, you have been raised with Christ.

Now, when it says, you have been raised, it means that when the body of Christ lay in the tomb, stone cold.

Remember that Russian novel that portrays the body of Christ and seeing that portrait. It's not a novel. It's a novel that tells a story about a picture. And the picture portrays the body of Christ, blue with death, and somebody saw it for the first time and recognized what the faith was all about.

[9 : 17] That you have been raised with Christ. That a dead body of a man in a tomb was raised in such a way that death would never again have power over it.

That's different from Lazarus. Jesus. This is the whole process of death. The death in which you and I are dead has been changed and a dead body has been raised and there is no determination, there is no conviction, there is no faith, there is no possible way that a dead person can raise themselves.

It is only by the power of God that the dead can be raised. And when you come to believe in Jesus Christ, the power of God, the word of God speaks to you and raises you in faith from the dead. And that's what it means. You are dead and you have been raised with Christ. The third thing it says is that Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

You know when we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate the fact that God from the eternal heavens is born in a manger in Bethlehem and Galilee, that God becomes man and dwells among us and takes on this human form.

[10 : 41] You know that, don't you? Well, when it says that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God, it means that man in Jesus Christ has ascended into and taken seated on the right hand of the eternal God in heaven.

Exactly the opposite process. God has become man at Christmas. Man has entered into the presence of God in Jesus Christ. That's what that means.

And that means that man's destiny is not the fulfillment of some earthly round. Man's destiny is to stand in the presence of God because that's where Jesus Christ is.

Oh, if I could spend the day at this, I would be delighted, but I can't. And I won't. And, uh, the fourth thing it says in this statement, these are five statements, the fourth of them is, your life is hidden with Christ in God.

That is, nobody can look at you and see who you are. All they see in you is your particular mortal coil, your subjection to fatigue and hunger and disease and, and, uh, consumed perhaps by human and earthly ambitions.

[12:19] That's all they can see. But they can't see you because you are hidden to them. Where are you hidden? You're hidden with Christ in God.

That's where your life is. Your life is, in a sense, in safekeeping because it is in Christ and Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

That's where your life is. So nothing can happen to you. Neither disease, nor hunger, nor war, nor revolution, nor famine, nothing can happen to you because your life is hidden with Christ in God.

That's where your life is. Terribly important that you understand that because we get very confused and find that difficult to understand.

But you must understand that. The fifth statement is when Christ appears, you will appear with him in glory.

[13:27] Your life is hidden and that which is hidden will one day appear. That which is hidden in Christ will one day appear with him in glory.

That's what your life is all about. It's how you live your life here on earth. You live it knowing that you have been raised, that you have died, that you have been raised with Christ, that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, that your life is hidden with Christ in God, and that when Christ is revealed in glory, so will you be.

And that's what the world is all about. You see, the Globe and Mail talks about the hidden realities that we won't talk about in our society.

The hidden realities that shape our world, we won't talk about. The hidden reality is that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, that you have been raised to life in Christ, that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and ultimately all authority and all power and all dominion and all judgment belongs to him, and that when he is revealed, you will be revealed with him.

You won't know who you really are. Until you are revealed, until the life which you have hidden in Christ is revealed with Christ at his appearing.

[15:10] These are the five facts which confront you on this Easter morning. And may God's grace so work in your heart that you may take hold of that.

That's why Paul says, set your mind on this. Set your heart on this. Understand that this is the basic reality of who you are. Then you have reason to sing with wonder in your heart that Jesus Christ is risen today.

Let me pray. Father, the one and awesome fact of your resurrection, the awesome fact that we have been brought from death to life through faith in Jesus Christ, the awesome reality that our life is hidden with Christ in God and that we won't understand even our own lives until they are revealed when Christ himself is revealed for who he really is.

God, give us great joy in the knowledge of your purpose of love towards this broken world in Jesus Christ by his resurrection from the dead.

Amen.