

Christ's Triumph Over the Grave

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Date: 12 April 2020

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[0 : 0 0] A very good evening to our worship here this evening and trust that we'll all know God's blessing as we seek to worship him for a short time and pray that as everybody engages in your own home that we might know the presence of the living God. We're going to begin with a word of prayer. Lord our gracious God, we pray to bless us. We give thanks Lord for another opportunity of worshipping you, of being able to draw into your presence and we pray that we might know that presence and your protection. We know that the evil one is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and we know that even at this very moment he will do and is doing everything to prevent your word being shared into people's homes throughout the land and indeed throughout the world. And so we pray that you will halt his opposition and that you will enable your word to go out with power and with enabling so that it will go out as a source of encouragement and help and strength to each and everyone who hears and receives the word of truth. We pray that you will bless us at a very difficult time, a time of uncertainty, a time of fear, a time when so many people's lives have been turned upside down. And as we are in the grip of this virus that is a killer, we pray Lord for those who are critically ill in hospital. We ask Lord that it might please you to spare, that it might please you to bring healing. Help those who are on the front line who are dealing with harrowing circumstances day in day out, who must be going home drained every night and having to pick themselves up to restart again the next day. Lord grant them, grant them grace and help and strength to NO ■■■ in the day, God support. We pray for those who mourn in the ■. Lord we pray with all those who who mourn, whose hearts are sore and broken. And it's so hard as many people are having to to DI and O Lord may you be close to them. Don't let dem die alone, may your presence, may your spirit

GO into their hearts and ask Lord that you will bless them. And we pray Lord for every morning heart. We pray those who are working in science and medicine. We pray that a vaccine will be found. We pray that even some medications that are already in use, that they may be discovered, maybe even linking medicines up, may be discovered as something which will alleviate the worst of the symptoms of this virus. We commit all into your care and recognize that this world was fragile at best, and this world is so uncertain. But we pray that we may today focus upon the certainty of the one who never changes, the living and through God, the God yesterday, today and forever, who is the same.

Bless us then, we pray, and help us to receive your word with joy and take away from us our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to read God's word now in the gospel according to Mark.

Mark and chapter 15 and part of chapter 16. Mark chapter 15, and we read at verse 42. And when evening had come, since it was a day of preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, who was also looking for the kingdom of God, who was also looking for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died.

And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

[4 : 1 7] And Joseph brought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, saw where he was laid.

When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, brought spices so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? And looking up, they saw that the stone had

been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe. And they were alarmed. And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. Now, as very aware, today is Easter Sunday. And of course, this is a day of great triumph, great victory in the Christian calendar. It's a day that causes the heart of the Christian to beat with a sense of vitality and triumph, because it's a day that speaks to us of the rising from the dead of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Every Lord's Day is a reminder of that, because it was on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead in the early church, met on the first day of the week, and so do we. And it's one of the wonderful things, as we go to God's house and we go with joy. Like the psalmist said, I joyed when to the house of God. Go up, they said to me. And so we should, every Lord's Day, as we go, to seek to praise him.

[6 : 41] Now, as we know, on the Friday, Jesus was put to death in the most cruel and barbaric way. And of course, on that cross, he was dealing with our sin before God, paying the price for our sin. And at three o'clock, he gave up his spirit. He yielded his spirit to God. And his body was dead. His body was taken down from the cross. And Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph of Arimathea was the one who requested the body of Jesus. And both Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus in the tomb. And so we find that this was a day where an incredible sense of despondency entered into the hearts of the disciples. But it was also a moment of glee and triumph for the enemies of Christ. Because the enemies of Christ thought, that's it, we've got him. At long last, we have got rid of Jesus. How wrong they were. And how wrong everybody is who thinks that they can get rid of Jesus. Down throughout the generations, people and systems and governments have tried to extinguish Christianity. They've tried to remove Christianity. They've tried to obliterate the Christian faith. They've tried to shut out God's word and the Bible. Well, the generations have come and gone. They have come and gone. But Christ remains. Christianity remains. God's word remains. And will remain.

And any person who gives their energies to try and remove the Christian faith is spending all their energy on something that is utterly impossible to do. And the glee of the authorities in getting rid of Christ was very short-lived, of course. But as we said, the disciples, they were utterly despondent. They were broken men. They were sad. Because their sense of hope had gone. They had hoped in Christ. They had trusted in Christ. They had believed in Christ. And everything seemed to have died with them.

And so we find, and not here, but in the other Gospels, we find it said there that they were in just a wee room together. They were behind locked doors. They were frightened, sad men.

[9 : 24] And everything that they had believed had kind of gone. But the problem with the disciples was that they hadn't grasped the teaching of Jesus. Jesus had very simply, very clearly, had told them that this is exactly what was going to happen to him. But they weren't ready to believe him.

They weren't ready to take on board what he was saying. In fact, we find on one occasion that Peter tried to stop him. When Jesus was telling what was to happen, Peter said, these things are not going to happen to you. And in fact, Peter became so vehement about it that Jesus had to rebuke him. He said, get thee behind me, Satan. He recognised that it was the power of the darkness that was in fact speaking through Peter at that particular moment. But as we said, the problem with the disciples was that they had their own preconceived ideas as to who Jesus was and what Jesus was going to do.

And you know, we should always be careful when we come to God's word, that our own preconceived ideas, our own prejudices, our own fanciful ideas, sometimes they need to be binned. Because God's word has to alter and shape our mind and shape our lives. We have to be, we have to discover what God's word is saying. And that often is radical. It is often challenging. It's often scary. But it's always true. And so it's important for us that we come to God's word with a prayer of the psalmist, open thou mine eyes that I might behold wonderful things out of your law. Every time we come to God's word, let's ask, Lord, open my eyes that I might see, that I might understand, that I might believe.

So the disciples had problems understanding what had happened with Jesus. The one person probably who didn't was Mary of Bethany. We've often said this, but Mary was the most spiritually minded follower that the Lord Jesus had. Because Mary understood things that the other disciples, even Peter, even John, hadn't grasped. And that was very clearly highlighted. We've often said this before. But when, remember when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and she came in for a lot of criticism because people were looking at this as an extravagant waste. As she anointed the feet of Jesus with this expensive perfume. But Jesus exonerated Mary and rebuked those who criticized. And Jesus said, it's in light of my burial that she's done this. Mary recognized what Peter and James weren't recognizing. Her faith was great. Her devotion was great. Her love was great. Her understanding was great. Her knowledge was great. And how was that? Because every time we meet with Mary, she's at the feet of Jesus. The place of humility. The place of learning. And that's how we need to be. We need to get off of high perches sometimes and just come down and humble ourselves before the Lord, before his word.

[12:50] And say, Lord, teach me. I need to know. I need to understand. And this is the greatest way that we can live our lives is in dependence upon God's word. And I know we're slow. If you're like me, I'm slow to learn. And often slow to do. But we need the teachable spirits and we need the willing heart.

And ask the Lord for that. I must ask the Lord for that. You must ask the Lord for that. Lord, give me a teachable spirit. Give me a willing heart that I might be ready to obey you.

But as we said, the disciples were defeated and deflated. They were sad. And Jesus had said to them before this, remember in the washing of the feet, he said to them, what I am doing, you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand. And that is so true in our lives and particularly in our Christian life. Sometimes it is true before we become Christians because God has begun to work within us. And we don't know what's going on. We don't know what's happening. But then when we come to faith, we realize now I'm beginning to see what God was doing. But it's also true right throughout our Christian life. And it's right, it's true throughout every person's life. But it's particularly true in the Christian's life that there are many things as time goes on and you begin to realize and you say, now I'm beginning to understand. Now I'm seeing what is happening. And you know, the amazing thing is that often in a big picture, when some great big thing is happening, we realize that God is actually in this big event, working intimately and personally within our own lives, where we're coming to see things and discover things and appreciate things. And there are things that maybe need to be taken out from our lives, things that need to be dealt with in our lives.

And we realize, God is at work. It's as if this whole thing was just for me. Of course it's not. But this is why, how it says, you know, how God is working all things together for our good.

And so this is part of the amazing work that is going on. So we need to pray for this teachable spirit. Christ was put to death on the Friday and he was buried. And Jesus Christ lay under the power of death from that time on the Friday until very early in the first day of the week, he rose from the dead. Now, of course, when Jesus was put into the grave, when Jesus died, his body was really dead.

[15:32] There was a separation of soul and body, same as we will experience, and every person who dies. But there was one difference with the body of Christ, that the corruption and decay that sets in with death did not happen with him. We'll be singing in the end, Psalm 16, and it tells us here of how the Holy One saw no corruption. His body in the grave saw no corruption. But Jesus, in our place, had to go, had to die, and he had to go into the grave. He had to go under the power of death and under the power of the grave. But death couldn't hold him, and the grave couldn't keep him.

And so Jesus rose again from the dead. And that's why this particular weekend, above all weekends, is so special to us. Because this is the day that the Lord has made. This is the day that Jesus rose again. Over 2,000 years ago, on this Lord's Day morning, Jesus very early rose from the dead. Greatest weekend in the history of this world. There's been a lot of great weekends, and I'm sure you personally have had great weekends. But no weekend has ever had the impact on this world and on the whole of the human race than that weekend where Jesus was put to death on the Friday and then rose again. Because the impact of that affects the whole world. The impact of that affects every individual. Because one day, every single one of us has to appear before Christ and give an account of what we have done in this world, whether good or bad. And so we read that very early in the morning, we find the women making their way to the grave. And they were taking spices because they were going to anoint the body of Jesus. But there was one huge problem. And that

problem was that there was a huge stone that was in front of the tomb. And they wondered who is going to take it. How are we going to roll away this stone? And as you and I know, this has been often demonstrated to us as this great example given to us of going on in faith, even when obstacles and problems are in the way. You see, human reason would say, oh, well, you know, there's actually no point in going to the grave because we can't shift the stone. But the wonderful thing is that faith doesn't look to the problem. Faith focuses upon the

Lord. And love and faith go on, irrespective of the problems. And that's what these women did. It's like Peter walking on the water. As long as he was focused upon Jesus and heard the words of Jesus saying, come, he was able to walk on the water. It's when he looked around and he thought, what am I doing here? What are the size of these breakers? Hear the roar of the wind. What am I doing?

He began to sink. Because the voice of reason came in, began to fill his mind, and he began to look at things rationally, and he lost his focus on Christ. With our focus on Christ, we are able to do great things. By my God assisting me, David says, I overleap a wall. David had many walls to overleap, but it was with God's assistance. And that's where we have to come to, that place of utter and absolute dependence upon him. Remember that you and God are a majority. Now, the evil one, always he wants to give you, to make you give up and say, ah, I can't do this. And you know, there's so many failures within our Christian life because we listen to reason and we listen to the evil one. And we say we can't. But with God, we can. And that is why we must seek for the faith and the devotion and the love to go on and to conquer in and through Christ. Anyway, here is this wonderful news that Jesus is not here.

He is risen. The empty tomb, the empty place, it's the great triumphant moment in the life of the Christian. Because you see, Jesus had to rise from the dead. He went to the cross to die for our sins.

But it wasn't sufficient that he just died and then remained under the power of death. He had to rise again. Paul tells us if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, we would still be in our sins. So Jesus is rising from the dead is essential, absolute, paramount. It's vitally important for our complete salvation. And remember, this is a complete salvation because the salvation that Jesus Christ won for us is not just where he deals with our sin and forgives us our sin and pardons our sin.

[20 : 47] It is also a salvation that is eventually dealing with our body. Because as Jesus went under the power of death and under the power of the grave and won victory over death in the grave, he has won it for us as well. And there will be a resurrection morning for you as a believer. Where you will, your body will rise.

Jesus is a first fruits. His rising from the dead is a personal guarantee to you that you will also rise from the dead. And your body will rise. And your body will rise. And your body will rise. And your body will rise.

And will rise in his immediate presence forever. There is no news that can compare to that news. People want any news. We want good news. We want good news. We've heard news readers complain about how dark their news items sometimes are. And they say, wish we had more good news. Well, here's the best news ever. That Jesus has risen from the dead. And what has happened to him by way of resurrected power is what will happen to you as well.

And we know that 40 days afterwards, Jesus, after his resurrection, we believe he was going back and forth to heaven. But he was coming back to earth and appearing to his disciples and to many of his followers.

But the wonderful thing is, then at the 40 days after, he ascended. This is what we would term the final ascension into glory until he returns again. And today he is in glory. And personally for you, he's preparing a priest for you. He has done that initially by his death and his resurrection.

[22 : 41] And you know something? He's looking forward to the day when you're going to come home with him. Father, I will that those also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. That's what Jesus said in his great prayer. He's longing for the day when you're going to come home to be with him. And right now he is sitting at the right hand of the Father in glory, in majesty, in dominion, in power, in rule. He's ruling over this world. He is head of the church. He is your head.

We are his body. And so let us trust him, even in the midst of all the chaos and all the pain and all the uncertainty and all the confusion. Let us trust him in the darkness to know that he knows and that he is whatever comes your way, what may appear good or bad, that he has your best interests

in heart and he is working all things together for your good if you love him. If you don't today love Jesus, then I would urge you that you would right here, right now, ask him to be your Lord and Saviour.

Lord bless us, we pray. Bless our thoughts. Bless these words that we've considered. And we ask that you will do us good. Cleanse us, we pray, from our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 16. This is from the Sing Psalms. Psalm number 16 from Sing Psalms and from verse 8.

Bless shall I know at your right hand. Joy from your face will shine. So see that in verse 10. For you will not allow my soul in death to stay, nor will you leave your Holy One. And of course, that's speaking of Jesus, to see the tombs decay. He saw no corruption, no decay. So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 16 from verse 8 to the end.

[25 : 19] Before me constantly I said, I said, I said, the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand, I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore, my heart is glad. My tongue with joy will sing. My Godly tune will rest secure. In Rome, my soul in death to stay. Nor will you leave your Holy One.

You see the tombs decay. You have made known to me the path of life divine. You have made known to me the path of life divine. The path of life divine. The path of life divine.

The path of life divine. The path of life divine. The path of life divine. The path of life divine. Blessed shall I know at your right hand.

joy from your face will shine. And now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.

[27 : 41] ■■■ bir■■■■ For a true life divine.