

# Easter I

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Preacher: Bishop Chad Jones

[ 0 : 00 ] and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. On the first Easter, the Lord Jesus Christ left from his tomb and ran to his apostles with his Easter peace.

Peace be unto you. And that peace is constituted in the forgiveness of our sins. For without remission of sins and forgiveness of our trespasses, there is no peace.

The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross on a Friday and rose gloriously from the dead on a Sunday in his human body so that he may offer to his apostles and all who believe their word his peace. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 13, in one of the first sermons preached about the resurrection in Holy Scripture after that blessed event, that in his name, the name of Jesus Christ, repentance and remission of sins shall be preached unto all nations because he is risen from the dead.

Our call, it says for us this morning, and to God in his praise, that we are justified through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Because Jesus is risen, we are made white with God.

[ 1 : 22 ] And this power of forgiveness is transmitted in the church through the apostles unto the end of the world. We'll notice that the revelation of this gift took place on the first Easter evening.

Our Lord rose early in the morning on that Sunday morning, and we remember from last week the narrative of what happened and how the holy women went to the tomb and found it empty, how St. Mary Magdalene went to the apostles and testified to the fact of the resurrection, St. Peter and St. John ran to the tomb and discovered it was empty, and that evening, in the upper room, the same location as the Last Supper, the same location of the day of Pentecost, which is yet to come, on that first Easter night, the risen Lord Jesus appears to the apostles to offer his peace.

But that is not all that he does. He offers the sign of his victory. He shows them his hands and his side. The Lord Jesus is in a glorified body which has conquered death and is immortal.

Why would our Lord keep the wounds in his hands and his feet and his side when his body has been entirely transfigured and transformed? The reason is it is the trophy of his victory.

He shows the apostles the proof of his resurrection, that he is the one perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the whole world.

[ 2 : 59 ] And though he is risen from death in a glorified body, he has chosen to keep the wounds as the sign of his power, the sign of his love, the power of his conquest over sin, Satan, and death.

This is our trophy. This is our victory. In Christ, we have the victory over evil. Our Lord also shows the apostles the signs of his crucifixion to show them that he is not a ghost.

He is not an apparition. He is truly risen in a true, physical, human body. A body continuous with the body born of Mary and crucified on Calvary and now risen from the dead.

The resurrection of the dead is no phantasm. It is a real, physical resurrection. Christ retains his human nature forever. And in his resurrection, it is glorified.

Now, how does all of this get applied to us? What is the consequence of this for you and for me?

How are we affected by the resurrection? It is the forgiveness of our sins which Christ has won.

[ 4 : 12 ] And so he breathes on the apostles, the eleven gathered in the upper room, and he says to them, Receive the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven.

Whoever sins you retain, they are retained. The Anglican ordination service for priests, the Anglican ordinal, retains this as the sacramental form of ordination of priesthood.

Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee. And it goes on to say, Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven.

Whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. The Lord Jesus Christ establishes in the fullness of his resurrection power the Catholic priesthood on the day of his resurrection.

What he has won, he commands to the apostles to be transmitted throughout the Church until the end of the world, until our Lord Jesus returns in glory to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire at his second coming.

[ 5 : 22 ] For Christ has indeed acquired for us the forgiveness of our sins and he commands to the apostles the power to forgive sins in his name. The twelve, or at this moment the eleven because of the loss of Judas, St. Matthias will come along shortly.

The twelve, who now sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve patriarchs of the New Israel, the twelve patriarchs of the New and Everlasting Covenant, they are made priests, sacramental representatives of the risen Lord.

They are empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit to forgive sins in Christ's name. This is why we say of ordained priests in the Catholic and Apostolic tradition, the priests are ordained in persona Christi Capitus, in the person of Christ who is the head of the church.

It is the job of the priest not necessarily to do this or to do that, but to be, to be an icon, an image of the risen Lord, to be an instrument of his grace, his love, his mercy, yes, his forgiveness.

So in the resurrection, our Lord runs from his tomb to give to the apostles the sacrament of holy orders, apostolic succession, and the sacrament of absolution, which guarantees for us the forgiveness of all of our sins.

[ 6 : 57 ] St. Paul declares in the second epistle to the Corinthians, when I forgive anyone his sins, I forgive them in the person of Christ. St. Paul is a Catholic bishop, a Catholic priest, and he forgives sins in the name and the person of Christ, just as all ordained priests do to this very day.

Apostolic succession, a fancy word which means that Christ's own authority and commission was commended to the twelve and then handed down to the bishops of the church throughout the ages, is not only the guarantor of grace, the means of grace by which we receive sacramental assurance that God's life is given to us in a tangible and physical way.

It is the guarantor of the resurrection. The first bishops of the church were the apostles. The apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Every bishop ordained in that unbroken line of order and ministry is a witness of the resurrection.

The episcopal ministry of the church, the apostolic succession, predates the canon of the New Testament and so does the Eucharist as well. In that line of bishops, we have testimony after testimony, witness after witness down through the ages that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

If a bishop or a priest does not believe in the resurrection, he has completely lost the whole point of being a bishop or a priest and one could even go so far as to say that he really isn't one in any real or substantial sense.

[ 8 : 43 ] For the bishop, the priest ordained by the bishop is a witness of the resurrection. So in the life and the heart of the church, we perpetually have this testimony, this profession of faith, this witness that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

And because the Lord is risen and because he has given his own commission and authority to the apostles, we know that when we receive the sacrament of absolution, which means the loosening of our sins, we know that our sins are forgiven completely by the risen Christ.

That beautiful gift of mercy and salvation is commended to each and every one of us. In the Anglican tradition, we traditionally have confession and absolution at morning and evening prayer in church.

We always have the general confession and absolution at the celebration of the mass. And we have the sacrament of confession, the sacrament of penance, in which Christ himself exercises this promise to us in an intimate and personal way where we can have the assurance, the confidence, the supreme promise and gift that our sins are truly forgiven.

and that ministry of absolution now will continue until Christ's return. The Lord Jesus is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of them that slept.

[ 10 : 12 ] For since by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ is Christus Victor. He is our King, our Lord, our God, our risen Savior.

And he rises from death to forgive our sins so that we can be restored to communion with God. Our Lord says in St. John chapter 14, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. We come to the Father through the risen body of Jesus, which is his church. And we have been incorporated into that risen body to receive the forgiveness of our sins.

Implanted into Christ in baptism, our sins washed away by water and the Holy Ghost, we continually receive that resurrection power of Christ in the forgiveness of sin through the grace of the church's sacraments.

It is a great mystery, but this is why our Lord came, why he was incarnate of the Blessed Virgin, why he died in Calvary and rose from the dead to give us eternal life.

[ 11 : 25 ] And he conveys this eternal life to us in a sacramental way. And that is what our Lord does when he makes the apostles priests on the first Easter night.

Peace be unto you, as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Christ's commission received from the Father is given to the apostles, and they, in turn, will hear the gospel throughout all the centuries, down through the ages, until the consummation of all things.

And we take our place, we step into that line as living members of Christ's body, governed by the apostles, and receiving the grace that Christ won for us through his resurrection.

As the Father has sent me, even so send I you receive the Holy Ghost. May the Lord Jesus fill our hearts this day, with Easter joy, as we thank him for being our Savior, our King, and our Redeemer, and offering to us the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.