

Easter Sunday

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Date: 31 March 2024

Preacher: Father Randall Russell

- [0 : 0 0] Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost.
- Amen. At the end of this life, there is an empty grave. An empty grave with our name on it. An empty grave which we all must one day enter and lie down.
- The only question is whether we will enter this grave in the hope of the resurrection of the dead. Or whether we will enter this grave as if it were quite literally a dead end.
- Now among those who enter the grave as if it were a dead end, there are really two groups of people. First, there are those who believe that when you die, that's it. That's the end. And there is simply nothing more.
- And second, there are those who believe that when you die, your soul goes on to some sort of afterlife. But in terms of the physical body, there is nothing more.
- [1 : 2 9] That after the body is dead and buried, again, that's it. Just another dead end. That's it. That's it. However, this morning, I'd like to make it perfectly clear that neither one of those views is actually biblical.
- For Holy Scripture teaches that for the faithful of God, death is not the end of life's journey. And neither is the grave the final end of the physical body.
- For in Job chapter 19, Job wrote, For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth, that is, on the last day.
- And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself.
- And my eyes shall behold him, and not another. How my heart yearns within me. But wait a minute.
- [2 : 4 7] Souls don't have flesh, and spirits don't have eyes. So how in the world can Job say that after his skin is destroyed, he shall see God in his flesh?
- Or how in the world can Job say that after his own death, he shall see God with his very own eyes, and not the eyes of another?
- And the answer is, because Job believed in the resurrection of the dead. As did the prophet Isaiah, when in Isaiah chapter 26, he writes, Your dead shall live.
- Together with my dead body, they shall arise. As did also the prophet Daniel believe in the resurrection of the dead, when in Daniel chapter 12, he writes, And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
- For all of Holy Scripture, not just the New Testament, but all of Holy Scripture tells us that at some future date, God will come in his glory to judge both the living and the dead, and those who have fallen asleep in the Lord shall awake to life eternal, while those who have died without God shall go to shame and everlasting contempt.

[4 : 27] And this is precisely why in the Old Testament, the ancient Israelites, unlike their pagan counterparts, always, always buried their dead, because they believed that the lifeless bodies, which they did not burn, but the lifeless bodies that they buried, and always laid to rest in the ground, would one day rise again at the resurrection of the just.

Therefore, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, St. Paul writes, But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since by one man came death, by another man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive again, but each one according to its own order.

Christ, the firstfruits, and afterward, those who are Christ's, at his most glorious return. which means that Easter isn't just about the resurrection of only one man, but it is about the bodily resurrection of all men who died to self and now live for God.

For how we approach that empty grave, which we all must one day enter, is not so much a question about how we approach death, but it is more a question of how we approach life.

[6 : 18] So let us not allow this hour of resurrection joy and Easter triumph to pass us by unnoticed, but let us all strive the more to live lives truly worthy of a grave that must empty its dead upon the return of Christ Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord.

For as we confess at the very end of the Nicene Creed each and every Sunday, I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Hallelujah.