

HE IS RISEN! A SERMON FOR EASTER SUNDAY

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Today is Easter Sunday, the sacred day when Christians all over the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In churches everywhere, people will greet each other saying, “He is risen!” On the first Easter Sunday 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose from the grave. “He is risen indeed!” The New Testament says:

Hebrews 2:14, 15: Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he **break the power of the devil**, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he **set free all** who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

2 Timothy 1:10: Jesus broke the power of death. He has shown us the way to eternal **life and immortality**.

By his death on the **cross**, Jesus died for all humanity and **set us free** from the penalty of sin. By his **resurrection**, Jesus rose from the grave to break the power of the devil and set all humanity **free** from the fear of death. Let us read the resurrection story from the gospel of Luke:

Luke 24:1-53: But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ³ So they went in, but they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes.

⁵ The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? ⁶ He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man ^[b] must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.”

⁸ Then they remembered that he had said this. ⁹ So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. ¹¹ But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it. ¹² However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.”

¹⁹ “What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

²² “Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, ^[d] he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

³² They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” ³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, ³⁴ who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.”

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread. ³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ “Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? ³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.” ⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

⁴⁴ Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then

he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

⁴⁹ “And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”

Early on Easter Sunday, several women went to the tomb where Jesus was buried to anoint his body with good smelling spices. To their great surprise, however, Jesus was not in the tomb. Two angels told the women that Jesus is risen from the dead!. When they heard the incredible news, the women ran back to tell the other disciples.

Later that day, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem. He walked with the two disciples and talked with them. He even explained the scriptures to them, the same scriptures that we know today as the Old Testament. These scriptures pointed forward in time to Jesus. Later, Jesus even broke bread with the two disciples.

Near evening time, Jesus suddenly appeared to the other disciples who were gathered together in an “upper room.” At first, the disciples were afraid. They thought Jesus was a ghost! Jesus allowed them to touch the wounds in his hands and feet. He even ate a piece of fish to prove that he was not a ghost. Then Jesus reminded the disciples that it was “written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.”

WE TOO SHALL BE RAISED

Jesus defeated the power of death and the grave to set all humanity **free** from the power of sin, death and the devil. Like Jesus, **we** too shall be raised from the dead! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will also raise our mortal bodies.¹ The New Testament says:

Romans 6:3-5: ³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we **died** and were **buried with Christ by baptism**. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been **united** with him in his death, **we will also be raised to life as he was**.

Romans 8:11: ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, **he will give life to your mortal bodies** by this same Spirit living within you.

2 Corinthians 5:1-5: For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an **eternal body** made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ² We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our **heavenly bodies** like new clothing. ³ For we will put on heavenly bodies; **we will not be spirits without bodies**. ⁴ While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it’s not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our

¹ Also Rom. 6:5, 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 4:13–14.

new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. ²

OUR RESURRECTED BODIES

When our bodies are raised from the dead, we will have **a body like Jesus has**. We will not be ghosts. We will not be spirits floating around on a cloud. We will have **physical** bodies that can be seen and touched. Yet, we will be able to pass through walls and enter a room suddenly, just as Jesus did. We will even be able to eat fish and many other good things. But our new bodies will not get sick or tired. In our new bodies, we will experience no pain and suffering, no sickness and disease. The New Testament says:

1 Corinthians 15:42-49: ⁴² ... Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be **raised** to live forever. ⁴³ Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. ⁴⁴ They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be **raised** as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

⁴⁵ The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶ What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. ⁴⁷ Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. ⁴⁸ Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. ⁴⁹ Just as we are now like the earthly man, **we will someday be like the heavenly man**.

Note carefully what these verses teach us: **Someday, we will be like Jesus**. We will have “spiritual” bodies. This does not mean we will be like ghosts. We will have bodies that are suited for the **heavenly realms**. In our Father’s house, Jesus said, there are many dwelling places (John 14:2). Our bodies will be suited for our Father’s house, where we will dwell forever in joy, beauty and peace with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ASCENSION

Because Jesus is risen from the grave, we too shall rise from death. We will put on our spiritual bodies. We will be clothed with bodies suitable for dwelling in our Father’s house.

In order to better understand God’s beautiful plan, however, we must now consider the **ascension** of Jesus Christ—that is, his glorious return to his Father in heaven. Jesus’ death on the **cross**, his **resurrection** from the dead and his **ascension** into heaven are all important and necessary for our salvation.

Jesus Our High Priest

Forty days after Jesus rose from the grave, he ascended into heaven. Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father, where he serves as our **High Priest**. The New Testament says:

² 1 Cor 6:14: ¹⁴ And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

2 Cor 4:14: ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you.

Philippians 3:20, 21: ²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. ²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control

Hebrews 9:11, 12: ¹¹ So Christ has now become the **High Priest** over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. ¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our **redemption** forever.

Hebrews 7:24, 25: ²⁴ But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. ²⁵ Therefore he is able, once and forever, to **save** those who come to God through him. He lives forever to **intercede** with God on their behalf.

Hebrews 4:14-16: ¹⁴ So then, since we have a great **High Priest** who has entered heaven, **Jesus** the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come **boldly** to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his **mercy**, and we will find **grace** to help us when we need it most.

Jesus has entered the Most Holy Place in heaven, where the Father sits on his glorious throne, surrounded by multitudes of angels and heavenly hosts. At the right hand of the Father, Jesus acts as our “intercessor.” That is, he is speaking to his Father **on our behalf**. As our **High Priest**, Jesus is offering his perfect sacrifice of faith and obedience to the Father **in our name**. Throughout his life on earth, Jesus walked in the shoes of Adam, offering the perfect faith and obedience to God that Adam failed to offer. In our union with Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we all share in Jesus’ life of perfect faith and obedience. Through a “wonderful exchange,” Jesus gives us his “right-ness” and holiness, while taking our sin upon his shoulders. In our union with Christ, we too are the faithful and obedient children of God.

What Does It Mean for Us Today

When Jesus rose from the dead, he brought in “new creation.” His resurrection was the beginning of the **renewal** of all things. Because we are united to Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we too are “new creations.” The New Testament says:

2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 17-19: Since we believe that **Christ died for all**, we also believe that **we have all died** to our old life. ¹⁵ He died for **everyone** so that those who receive his **new life** will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was **raised for them**. ... ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a **new person** [a new creation]. The old life is gone; **a new life has begun!**

When Jesus died on the cross, **we** died “in him.” In the eyes of God, our old sinful self is dead and buried. We are **new creations** (new persons) in Christ. The apostle Paul writes:

Colossians 1:11b-14: ... May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³ For he has **rescued** us from the kingdom of darkness and **transferred** us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and **forgave** our sins.

God the Father has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness controlled by Satan. He has transferred us into the “Kingdom of his dear Son.” Jesus has purchased our freedom. Because Jesus lived a life of perfect faith and obedience on our behalf and in our name, all our sins are **forgiven**.

In addition, when Jesus rose from the grave on the first Easter Sunday, we were “**born again**” “in him.” The apostle Peter writes:

1 Peter 1:3-5: All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been **born again**, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is **ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.**

Believers do not need a special “religious experience” to be “born again.” We were born again 2,000 years ago when Jesus rose from the grave! We are new creations “in Christ.” We are all “born again” Christians. Just as we died and were buried with Christ in baptism, we are now “born again” through Jesus’ resurrection from the grave. The apostle Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:4-7:⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, **he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.** (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)⁶ **For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.**⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are **united with Christ Jesus.**

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who comes to us in the name of the Father and the Son, we are **united** to Jesus Christ. In our **union** with Christ, we are included in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. When Jesus died on the cross, **we died** “in him.” When Jesus rose from the dead, **we rose** from the dead “in him.” When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, **we ascended** “in him.” From God’s eternal point of view, we are **already** seated with Jesus “in the heavenly realms.” Our place at the Father’s table is **already** secure. We do not have to earn our place at the Father’s table. **Jesus** has earned it **for us** through his perfect faith and obedience.

In our **union with Christ**, all that Jesus has done **for us** is made real **in us** through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. By the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, we are made **right** with God. We are **holy, blameless** and **without a single fault** in the eyes of our loving Father in heaven. The New Testament says:

Romans 4:25: He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was **raised** to life to make us **right** with God.³

1 Corinthians 1:30: God has **united** you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us **right** with God; he made us **pure** and **holy**, and he **freed us from sin.**

2 Corinthians 5:21:²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made **right** with God through Christ.

Colossians 1:22:²² Yet now he has **reconciled** you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are **holy** and **blameless** as you stand before him **without a single fault.**

³ Romans 4:25 NIV: ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Ephesians 1:3, 4: All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly realms because we are **united with Christ**.⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us **in Christ** to be **holy** and **without fault** in his eyes.⁴

According to these scriptures,

- We are made right with God.
- We are united with Christ, who has made us pure, holy and free from sin.
- Because Jesus has “reconciled” us, or “brought us together,” with the Father, we are holy, blameless and without a single fault in the eyes of God.
- Because we are united with Christ, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

Take a moment to think about what these wonderful scriptures teach us. **We do not stand as sinners in the sight of God.** We are **saints!** We do not have to strive and struggle for holiness. We are **already** holy, blameless and without fault in the eyes of God. We do not have to earn our salvation through “good works,” because “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms” is already our “**in Christ.**” And it is all because of what Jesus has done **for us.** Even now, as our High Priest, Jesus stands beside the Father, presenting his perfect faith and obedience on our behalf and in our name.

Is it time for us to take these wonderful teachings seriously. It is time that we understand **who we really are.** Sadly, however, we are told again and again that we are sinners in the sight of God. We are told that God is too holy to look upon us because of our sins. We are told that God is angry and wants to punish us for our sins. **But none of the things are true!!** They were **never** true! We are not dirty sinners in the sight of God. We are holy, pure and blameless. We are without a single fault. We are our heavenly Father’s dearly-loved children. The apostle John said:

1 John 3:1: See what great **love** the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children of God!** And that is what we are!

Nevertheless, although the Bible teaches that we are pure, holy and without fault in the eyes of God, we do not always act like saints. Instead, we often appear to ourselves and to others as sinners. We look into the mirror and we see the dirt on our faces. Yet, we are unable to see beneath the surface in order to discover who we really are because our **true identity** is **hidden**, waiting to be **revealed**. The New Testament says:

Colossians 3:3, 4:³ For you died to this life, and **your real life is hidden with Christ** in God.⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is **revealed** to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

1 John 3:2:² Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but **he has not yet shown us what we will be like** when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

1 Peter 1:5: And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is **ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.**

⁴ **Heb 10:10:** For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.
Heb 10:14: For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

Our “right-ness” and holiness are “**hidden with Christ in God.**” We will not see ourselves as we truly are **until Jesus comes again.** Our salvation will be **revealed** on the last day for all to see. Therefore, to the world around us, we may look like sinners. But in the eyes of God, we are saints—and one day, our true identities will be revealed for all to see. Halleluiah!

This is the good news of Easter. Jesus is risen! He has broken the chains of death to give us **eternal life.** Through Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, God has made all things new. And we are all part of it! We are new creations in Christ. We are **all** included in the saving life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now that we know we are saints, now that we know we are holy and blameless and without fault in the eyes of our Father, let us go and live according to our true identities. Let us live as the saints we already are. Happy Easter! **Amen!**