

Resurrection B (4/12/09 – *The Meaning of Christ's Resurrection*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

That's the first thing we said this morning at the start of this Divine Service. *The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ* is of such paramount and overarching importance that we declare it first and foremost on Easter.

And we're not the first ones to think this way – by far. St. Paul says as much in his first letter to the CORINTHIANS: *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.* Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and on the third day He was raised in accordance with the Scriptures. For Paul, this interlocking set of facts is foundational to the Gospel that he preached and passed on.

And that foundation continued to be passed on. We find almost the same exact words from our *Epistle* showing up a couple of centuries later in the NICENE CREED (which we are about to confess): *And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.* So from Jerusalem to Corinth to Nicaea ... to Colton – the same message has been resounding through the centuries: The Lord Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross for our sins, Whose Body was buried in the tomb, on the third day rose, bodily, from the dead. And all this was according to God's plan ... according to the Scriptures God had inspired His prophets to write centuries earlier. *The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ* that we celebrate today is *of first importance* in the Gospel that Paul preached and that the faithful Church continues to preach still to this day.

Without these great facts – and without them at the forefront – there is no Christianity ... there is no Gospel ... there is no hope ... there is nothing to preach ... nothing to believe. *If Christ has not been raised* – Paul says later in 1COR 15 (as we heard at the Sunrise Service) – *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* And again: *If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.* **Everything** rides on Christ actually being raised from the dead – physically ... bodily. If not for that, there's nothing for us ... no meaning.

If Christ has not been raised, then He Himself is a liar and the Gospels are untrustworthy. For Jesus Himself prophesied His rising again and all the Gospel writers record the bodily Resurrection of Christ as the culminating event of their accounts. What's more, if Christ has not been raised, then **you** are still in your sins

... lost ... condemned ... fodder for hell. For without His Resurrection, Christ's death means nothing – we all die ... many good people have died nobly ... suffering unjustly. But that isn't much – certainly not enough to give hope. If Christ has not been raised, then this Christianity thing is a farce ... and we are most pitiable to have fallen for it.

This is serious business. The implications are life and death. If Christ has not been raised, then you will not be raised, either. Death will come and take you away – and that would be the end of the story. If Christ has not been raised, then human beings are just an accidental phenomenon of evolution, an evolved mass of cells – no different, really, from the gopher or dandelion in your yard ... bodies so cheap they can be disposed of like so much refuse. Human life loses its value and meaning, if Christ has not been raised. Death is the end of the road, and that's it – nothing more. Were Christ not arisen, then death were still our prison – and sin and hell as well.

If Christ has not been raised —— but, in fact Christ **has** been raised! That's the truth of the matter ... the good news of that Sunday morning! ***But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, and has become the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*** Christ has indeed been raised ... and that changes everything! **Everything!** All the discouraging implications that would be the case if Christ had not been raised – these are all reversed ... and turned around in the light of our Lord's Resurrection.

Since Christ has indeed been raised, that means He is telling the truth in everything He says – and the Gospels are the true record and revelation about God ... truth you can rely on. ***He is risen, just as He said...*** and ***these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name.***

Since Christ has indeed been raised, then **you** are NOT still in your sins, **you** are NOT lost. Christ's Resurrection validates and puts God's stamp of approval on everything Jesus did when He bled and died there on the Cross – as we remembered so vividly on ***Good Friday***. Christ's Resurrection means that God the Father has accepted Christ's sacrifice for sin ... said *I approve* it. By raising Jesus from the dead, God the Father says of Christ's death on the Cross of Calvary: *Yes, My Son, that does the job, that covers all sins for all time. Job well done! The debt of sin for all humanity has been paid ...* and stamps it: PAID IN FULL. Christ's Resurrection says **yes**, therefore, to **your forgiveness**. What Jesus did on ***Good Friday*** covered all of your sins, dear Christian. Your faith in Christ is not futile ... but rather **fruitful** – and you are **freed** from your sins.

Since Christ has indeed been raised, then that makes Christianity the one true

religion in all the world. When Jesus said: ***I AM the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me***, He meant every syllable of it. Since Christ has indeed been raised, then the Church is the most relevant place to be in all the world – not a place to avoid ... or attend once or twice a year ... under a sense of obligation. For here in the Church you get something you get nowhere else – You get Christ Himself speaking His Resurrection-filled words of life to you through the preaching of the Gospel. You get Christ Himself giving you His Body and His Blood in this Sacrament – **for you ... for your forgiveness** ... and for the strengthening of your faith. The crucified and resurrected Christ is here – therefore, there is really no better place on earth to be.

And since Christ has indeed been raised, then death is not the end of the story for you – just like it wasn't for Christ. There is something more in store. Death is not the end of the line for those who die in Christ. By His being raised from the dead, Christ is ***the FIRSTfruits of those who have fallen asleep*** – that is, of those who die with faith in Christ. That Christ is the **FIRST**fruits means there are more to follow. Your loved ones who have died in the faith ... all the great saints of the past (even the unknown ones) ... you and I ... and all who trust in Christ -- we will not be disappointed. For you and I – our mortal bodies – will be raised at the Last Day, new and glorious ... sinless ... immortal ... and fitted out for eternal life. In Christ we have new life in **this** life already; but beyond that, we have hope – sure and certain hope – for the life to come.

That's what Christ's Resurrection means for you ... and for all believers.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen]