

## **The Resurrection of our Lord / April 4, 2021**

**Mark 16:8**

**“And he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here’...And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them...”**

### **The Day Jesus Rose**

The day Jesus died, the earth shook and the sun was darkened. The day Jesus rose all was quiet and bright. The day Jesus rose was the first day of the week according to the Old Testament calendar. It was the first day of creation, in which the Lord began to call all things into being, by His all-powerful word. John begins his gospel, introducing Jesus as the creative word through whom all things were made. He wrote: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through Him...In Him was life, and the life was the light of human beings.” On Easter Sunday, the first day of creation, Jesus rose and through Him, the Word made flesh, God began His work of creating new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

The resurrection of Jesus is more than the revivification of one man. The resurrection of Jesus is more than the first-fruits of the resurrection of all believers. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of a universal renewal, in which the fundamentals of life as we know it, will be gone. Most fundamentally, sin and death will be no more. God will wipe the tears from every eye and make His dwelling among us as in the beginning, when He made humans in His image.

This renewal begins now in the human heart, as the Holy Spirit gives us a spiritual rebirth or resurrection, by opening our hearts to faith in Jesus. Sin remains in the hearts of believers in this life, but it has lost both its controlling power and its power to condemn. Through the word and by the washing of baptism, the Spirit of Jesus makes His dwelling within us; the Spirit within us resists sin and empowers us to walk in newness of life.

The Spirit continually reminds us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ, through His dying and rising, has taken away the control and condemnation of sin, over those who believe. God who has begun this good work within us, will bring it completion when Jesus returns and gives us a share in His resurrection. Every Easter we remember that on the cross Jesus won the victory over sin and death and proves it, through His resurrection. Every Sunday is a little Easter, the remembrance of Jesus’ resurrection and the promise of our resurrection.

We celebrate the day Jesus rose as the beginning of a new creation and His resurrection, as the first-fruits of all believers. However, celebration was the furthest thing from the minds of the disciples and the faithful women, who visited Jesus’ tomb Easter morning. As the sun rose, the disciples were hiding in fear of the Jewish and Roman authorities. Their minds were clouded and their thoughts were in disarray. Everything they assumed about Jesus had turned out wrong. All their hopes had been dashed to the ground. They hoped He would be the one who would redeem Israel from servitude to the Romans and re-establish the kingdom of their ancestor David. They hoped He would give them positions at His right and at His left when He came into His glory; but He had died and had died a most horrible death at that!

The women went to the tomb with the same heavy hearts as we would have, the first time we visit the grave of a loved one, recently deceased and buried. Some people find it so painful that they put off visiting the grave for months, years and sometimes forever. Although Jesus had spoken plainly about both His death and resurrection, His words had echoed in their ears and not sunk down into their hearts. It’s hard to blame them. Would we have thought or felt, any differently? Some things are hard to believe. Some things are impossible to believe. It’s one thing to believe in concepts such as love, peace and forgiveness. It’s another thing to conceptualize and believe that someone will rise from the dead. None of the disciples believed Jesus would rise from the dead. When the women told them He had risen, most were skeptical.

Some Christians have custom of keeping a vigil from Holy Saturday to Easter morning, in anticipation of the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection. The women were not keeping vigil at the tomb waiting for Him to rise. They waited until the Sabbath was over, so they could dignify His body with spices, after it had been so horribly abused by the Romans and their religious leaders. Their absolute shock at encountering a heavenly being and an empty tomb, is captured by Mark who says, “And they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment

had seized them.” They didn’t walk away, they didn’t even run, they fled! It wasn’t that they felt threatened. They fled, because something so amazing and utterly other worldly had happened that they were terrified.

Each of the gospel writers tries to capture and emphasize something particular and meaningful about Jesus’ resurrection. There is so much to capture and it is so meaningful, that all the books in the world couldn’t exhaust the possibilities. That’s why to our ears, it seems that some of their descriptions don’t line up with each other. They don’t pretend to provide a cold clinical account. They seek to convey something of the life altering experience of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection turned the disciples inside out and changed everyone from followers to true believers. Jesus’ resurrection has the same effect on our lives!

Mark says the women were so afraid that they said nothing to anyone, while the other evangelists say they went and told the disciples. Certainly, they did tell what they seen after a while, but at first they were speechless. Their initial reaction is what Mark emphasizes, because it speaks to the singularity of Jesus’ resurrection; the effect it has on our relationship with God; and the effect it should have on our lives. That reaction was terror! Not the terror of danger. The holy terror of encountering the glory of God and experiencing His awesome power. This was astounding! This was something absolutely out of keeping with the way of the world. This was the beginning of a new creation, the renewal of heaven and earth as the home of God’s righteousness.

Jesus’ resurrection changed everything. It shows that He is the Son of God. It shows that His words are truth. It shows that He is the way and the truth and the life and that He alone brings us to the Father in peace. It shows that the Father accepted His sacrifice for the sin of the world and that there is forgiveness in time and for eternity, for all receive Him in their hearts through faith in His holy Name. His resurrection shows that all who believe and have been baptized in His Name, have a certain promise and a real hope of life beyond the grave; life beyond the constraints of this world tangled in time, bound in chains of sin and under the condemnation of death. Life as God intends it to be!

Jesus’ resurrection changed the disciples. It changed them from petty men, full of pride, who grasped at human greatness; into men who risked all and who gave everything for the blessing of believing and the privilege of telling others the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ resurrection changed the way they saw life and the way they lived their lives. How gladly they took up their crosses and followed Him! It changed the way they saw Jesus, not just as their teacher, but now truly as their Lord and God and Saviour.

Jesus’ resurrection has the same effect on our lives. It changes our relationship with God, so that rather than aliens and strangers to the promises of God, without God and without hope in the world, we have been reborn as children of God with the real hope of eternal life. Jesus’ resurrection changes the way we see life. Jesus’ resurrection gives us meaning in all things, even in our experience of death. Jesus’ resurrection changes the way we live our lives, so that we live not simply for ourselves, but also for others; not simply for pleasures in time, but with a view of eternity. Jesus’ resurrection opens our hearts to believe and opens our lips to tell others the good news of salvation in His name.

Jesus’ resurrection was greeted by the women at the tomb with astonished silence, but when its impact was felt and its meaning sunk into their hearts, they told everyone who would listen (and even those who didn’t want to listen) the good news that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The day Jesus rose, everything changed. His resurrection changes us too, now in time; and fully in eternity, when He will call us to rise to newness of life in body and in spirit. Jesus’ resurrection is something that should never fail to capture our imagination, fill us with holy awe, inspire and encourage our faith! He is risen Indeed! In His name. Amen