

He is Risen!

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He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Is there anything more that needs to be said on this holiest of days? This is our hope. This is our confidence. Jesus Christ died in our place, paying the price for our sins. Evil men crucified Him, but God raised Him to life again! And in Him we have life everlasting!

Easter Sunday is a day of great celebration for the Church today, isn't it? It is because of Easter Sunday ... Resurrection Sunday ... that Friday became "Good"! Jesus conquered sin and death on Easter Sunday. He burst out of His tomb to offer life to all; to restore and renew and regenerate all that was dead in sin. The sadness and sorrow and shame of Friday was wiped away by Resurrection Sunday. The waiting and wondering, the fear and anxiety, of Saturday was answered with hope by Resurrection Sunday.

I encourage you, if you have not already done so, to take time now to read the accounts of Jesus' resurrection shared in the Gospels (Matthew 28: 1-10; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9).

Faithful, grieving disciples went to Christ's tomb to anoint His body early that day. Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus, had anointed Him as required by Jewish law before placing Him in the tomb (John 19:38-42), so this

was simply an act of love offered by the women. But, to their shock and amazement, on arriving at the tomb they did not find His body. Instead, they witnessed a violent earthquake, they saw that the grave's heavy stone seal rolled away, and they encountered angels glowing with brilliant, dazzling white light! The soldiers who were guarding the tomb were so overcome by all of this that they fainted with the shock. But not the women!

The angel spoke to them, addressing both their fear and their grief, saying: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen just as He said!" (Matthew 28:6, NIV)

The angels then invited them, first, to "*Come and see*"! They were offered the opportunity to observe with their own eyes what the angel had declared. There was no death or decay to be found in the tomb that day! There was no body wrapped in grave-clothes to anoint, though the lingering hint of the burial spices may still have been in the air. The angels announced that Jesus was no longer dead, but the hope of resurrection had to take root within them; something that could only happen as they saw with their own eyes a grave that was body-less. And so the invitation came, "*Come and see!*" And stepping into the tomb in faith, accepting that invitation, they were rewarded with their first glimpse of resurrection glory!

The tomb was indeed empty! Jesus' body was gone! And hope stirred!

Were they convinced in that instant that He was risen from the dead? No. But this was the first step toward believing that He did hold power over sin and death; not just for Himself, but for them as well.

God offers us this same invitation today: *"Come and See!"* As we approach the tomb today, Resurrection Sunday 2020, I wonder, is it empty? Is it the place where we are confidently assured, again and again, that we serve a Resurrected Redeemer and Living Lord? And taking it further, if it is empty, if that is what we see as we enter, do our lives reflect the truth that He is alive for us and in us?

I read a quote this week that really conflicted me, "Our resurrected lives are the greatest proof of His Resurrection for the world today!" Are we offering that proof? Are we living as those who are alive in Christ; who serve a Risen Saviour?

We rejoice in Good Friday, in our Suffering Saviour dying for us, because in His death we know that forgiveness of sin is offered freely to all who will believe. But we must not stay at the cross. We must make our way to the empty tomb of Resurrection Sunday. We must come and see the proof that it offers; the proof that Jesus is The Way, The Truth and The Life!

He is alive! He is with us! And His resurrection power empowers us!

The old hymn proclaims it,

*"I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, whatever men may say!
I see His hand of mercy. I hear His voice of cheer.
And just the time I need Him He's always near!
He lives! He lives! He lives with me today.
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart!"*

If, in these days, you are struggling to experience His Living Power in and around you, then you need to accept God's invitation anew. "Come and see!"

The tomb is empty!

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Say it out loud, in this moment. Let it offer you hope again!

The earliest disciples took that step. The women entered and saw, and hope rose up in them. Continued appearances of their Resurrected Redeemer confirmed for all the believers what the empty tomb declared. We have their accounts of those post-resurrection encounters (which we studied in-depth last year) to assure us that the angel's declaration was true. There is no need to doubt. By faith we believe that He is alive forever; King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

On this Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, as we each "Come and see", we can join the angel chorus in proclaiming the truth,

“Love’s redeeming work is done! Hallelujah!
Fought the fight, the battle won! Hallelujah!
Death in vain forbids Him rise! Hallelujah!
Christ has opened paradise! Hallelujah!”

After we have responded to that first invitation to “Come and see”, we need to listen to and accept the angel’s second invitation: “Go quickly and tell!” (An invitation that was repeated by Jesus Himself, according to Matthew’s account.) It is not enough to come and see for ourselves. This gift of resurrection glory, of resurrection life, is to be shared with others. We regularly linger at the cross. We regularly linger at the empty tomb. And we should, as it helps to strengthen our faith and hope. But after we have lingered; after we have received anew the assurance that Christ died and rose again for us, we need to “Go and tell!” With both our resurrected lives and our redeemed lips we need to declare the truth that Jesus Christ is Risen!

The Holy Spirit has been given to us so that we can boldly offer witness to these truths. We’ve been following Peter’s faith journey over recent months, and in the book of Acts we observed this bumbling fisherman preach powerful sermons that declared the truth that Jesus was crucified, but God raised Him from the dead! These were the bold statements of faith he uttered at every

opportunity. And Peter emphasized again and again, that he (and the other disciples) were witnesses of these truths!

That responsibility now rests with us! The world needs to know our Resurrected Redeemer and Living Lord. The world needs to see in us the power of His resurrection. The world needs to hear from us the truth that He lives and loves! Are we going and telling? Are we faithful witnesses to these confident beliefs? Take time to linger at the cross and the tomb as you need to, but remember that, in granting us hope, the empty tomb beckons us each to “go and tell”.

Our world is filled with people who have lost hope. Only Jesus can restore what has been taken from them. Only Jesus offers the hope of life, abundant and free. Only Jesus offers the hope of sins forgiven. Only Jesus offers the hope of sacred communion with Creator God. Only Jesus offers the hope of resurrection power and glory.

This song by Brian Derksen presents clearly the hope that we can offer through Christ Jesus, so I close with it:

Jesus, hope of the nations.
Jesus, comfort for all who mourn.
You are the source of heaven’s hope on earth.

Jesus, light in the darkness.

Jesus, truth in each circumstance.
You are the source of heaven's light on earth.

In history You lived and died.
You broke the chains. You rose to life!

You are the Hope living in us.
You are the Rock in whom we trust.
You are the Light shining for all the world to see.

You rose from the dead conquering fear.
Our Prince of Peace, drawing us near.
Jesus, our Hope, living for all who will receive.
Lord, we believe!

May we each know and live in this hope today!

Happy Easter Sunday! Happy Resurrection Morning!

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!