

Title: He is Risen! - Live like it!

He is risen! What a wonderful day today is... Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus rose again from the dead, WE are assured of His victory over death and of His promise of eternal life in Heaven. Amen!

For a lot of people, Easter is just another holiday, a three day weekend of fun and no work. It's chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs. But as Christians, we know better. For Christians, Easter means the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! It means the promise of life after death! It means hope of a better life. It means joy. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we're just wasting our time here every Sunday. But it is the Word of God which has told us. That is why we believe. In fact, we know that these words: "He is not here, but He is risen", has changed the entire course of human history! "HE is risen," is precisely what makes Christianity different from all other religions. Mohammed didn't rise! Confucius didn't rise! Buddha didn't rise! Joseph Smith didn't rise Jim Jones is dead. David Koresh is dead. But Jesus is Alive! He's Alive! He is risen! For those who are ignorant of this fact... for those who have forgotten this... they are robbed of the very power and joy that Easter brings.

I want to take a look at our Gospel story. It has a message for us today. 2000 years ago, three days after the crucifixion of Jesus, two disciples, who were both named Mary, were going to Jesus' tomb to prepare his body for burial. It was the darkest hour, just before dawn. The women made their way to the tomb, a cave hewn in the rocky hillside, just outside the city. One of them says "I think it's a mistake to do this. Our enemies would love to catch us and destroy us all. Suppose they're hiding near the tomb and accuse us of trying to steal the body?" The other says "We'll just show them the spices we have and say, all we want to do is anoint the body for burial." But the first Mary stops and says, "Who will move the big stone covering the entrance of the tomb?" "Who will move the stone?" What was significant about this? Neither Mary expected anything unusual to happen. It was a simple preparation for burial, and nothing more. "We have to anoint the dead body of Jesus?" "Oh my, who will move the stone?"

I want to move quickly ahead to an Easter, 2000 years later. A man is in bed. An alarm goes off. Knowing that today is Easter Sunday, with an extra burst of will power, he rises out of bed. He reads the newspaper for local news. He listens to a couple Easter choirs on the radio in the car as he drives to church. He looks

forward to a festive celebration for Easter service today. But believe it or not, he has a lot in common with the women of 2000 years ago. Like the women at the tomb, he doesn't really expect anything unusual to happen. 2000 years ago, the women did not expect anything unusual, anything miraculous to happen. Their top priority – who will move the stone?

What was the problem with this? Three days after his crucifixion the disciples were moping around town, wondering what to do... mourning over the loss of their Lord, Jesus. They were blind to what was really happening around them. They were blind to a great celebration. In Heaven and earth there was celebration. On that very day, on the day of resurrection Jesus conquered Satan, overcame sin and death. On that very day, the Angels in Heaven were rejoicing over the redemption of mankind. Yet, Mankind was blind to the celebration. 2000 years ago, the women did not expect anything unusual. The disciples expected no miracle. But they were wrong! A wonderful miracle had happened. Who would move the stone for us? The stone had already been moved. An angel appeared before them saying "Christ had already risen from the dead."

So today, if you came NOT expecting anything unusual to happen, you too will be wrong. Why is that? I am going to answer that question with a question. "Why do you think the stone was rolled away?" The stone was not rolled away for Christ to get out. Not at all. Scripture tells us Jesus could get into rooms with doors locked from the inside. Why was the stone rolled away? Not to let Jesus out. The stone was rolled away so that WE could look in. It was rolled away so that the empty tomb could be visible to all. The empty tomb is the greatest evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. The empty tomb STILL stands, as evidence to all, that Jesus is not dead. He is alive! He is alive today! That is the great miracle which has happened. Jesus is alive. For this reason, when the angel met Mary at the empty tomb of Jesus he said - "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has **risen!** He is risen...."

2000 years later, the Angel is still bringing the same message. "Do not look for the living among the dead!" "He is risen!" I say to you that the news we hear today, the words "He is risen," is the most earthshaking, the most wonderful announcement you will ever hear. The bible is not just a good story book. For those who can hear.... "the Bible is a living Jesus talking to you." The words "He is risen" means that "Jesus is alive." We have a relationship with a living person. Jesus is real. Jesus is powerful. Powerful in our lives. Powerful in our lives today.

And this is so important to remember. When we forget these words, when we live our lives as if we do not have a relationship with a living Jesus. when we live our lives as if God, the creator of all things, the most powerful person in the universe, was not our father. our lives can be robbed of the confidence, of the joy of the power which God has given us.

Let me tell you where I see this the most - at funerals. For the non-Christian, death is the end. I have found at funerals where the mourners are non-Christians, the focus is on the past. They remember the good times and the shared times. But there is no sense of any future. For the non-Christian, death is the end. For the person who believes death is the end, this life is all there is, and it affects how they live their lives. For this reason there is only this life to work for. As the bumper sticker says, "he who dies with the most toys wins."

Christians, on the other hand, face death differently than the people of this world. For the Christian, death is NOT the end. When our time comes to face death, you and I have life, life with the risen Christ, life which will never end. It is, precisely for this reason that our entire life here on Earth is changed. The great Easter news that "He is risen" radically changes me, as a Christian. "He is risen" becomes the proof of the promise of eternal life in Heaven for those who believe. that death is not the end. The goal of my life is not having the most toys, but rather the goal of my life is looking forward to the promise of a joyous life in Heaven. "He is risen" becomes the guarantee that no matter what you may suffer here on Earth, Jesus is with you always. No matter what uncertainties you may have in your life, we can be certain that, God has a plan for you and that in the end all will be made right.

When I forget that God is in control, I start to worry about the problems in my life, I worry about "what I must to do to fix things", I start to put my faith my own power, I forget that God is there and will work all things out, In times of such doubt, that the words "He is risen" come as a comfort. It reminds me that God is real God is powerful. powerful in our lives, powerful in our lives today. God loves us and has plans of good for us. Each and every one of us if we look back at our lives, can remember a time when things were bad but in the end everything turned out okay. If we are honest, we can admit that it was God who was taking care of us all the time, just as he promised. It is times as this that we know "He is risen."

And as these words become more real to me, all the more do I trust Jesus for my future, all the more do I live my life as an instrument through which Jesus works. No, more than that - I live my life as a child of God, with the sure knowledge that

in everything that I do the living Christ is walking there beside me, empowering me to live a God pleasing life. There is such a freedom and confidence in giving my life over to Jesus. "He is risen" reminds me that God is in control and that he loves me, and will always take care of me. Jesus calls you to put your trust in Him. He offers you the life of confidence and freedom given to those who put their trust in him, and calls you to live it out every day of your life. The great miraculous gospel message for us today and every day is "He is risen."