

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

The Resurrection of Our Lord (2022)

Do Not Be Sad, Be Joyful!

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“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb . . . Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (John 20:11, 15, ESV)

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (Congregation response) *“He is risen indeed! Alleluia!”*

What a marvelous day, especially for everyone who believes in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and salvation from death and the devil. The excitement and joy of this day has for centuries encouraged the faithful to joyfully respond to the great Easter Proclamation, “Alleluia! Christ is risen!” by saying, “He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” Here, the church responds to the glorious, good news of our restoration that comes from the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. So, on this most glorious morning, the whole church in heaven and on earth rejoices and responds to the great Easter Proclamation, “Alleluia! Christ is risen!” by saying ... (congregation response) “He Is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!”

The Gospel Reading on this blessed Easter morning shows us Mary Magdalene standing outside the tomb in which Jesus was buried, weeping because the stone that had sealed the tomb had been rolled away and the body of her Lord was gone. She and the other women had gone to the tomb early in the morning to complete the burial process, which was only partially completed on Friday because the Sabbath was too quickly coming upon them. Finding the tomb open, she ran to the disciples and told St. Peter *“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” (John 20:2, ESV)* Greatly disturbed, St. Peter and St. John ran to the tomb to see for themselves, what they found and verified that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. All of this was greatly disturbing, because they simply didn’t understand *“that he must rise from the dead.” (John 20:9, ESV)* It mattered not how many times our Lord had told them that He would be killed and rise from the dead in three days, the truth of the resurrection simply had not sunk in. It can even be said today that the truth of our Lord’s resurrection hasn’t sunk in in many circles.

Much of this is due to the way Christians articulate the New Testament’s message concerning what God had accomplished in Christ. Because the focus of the fulfillment of man’s atonement is on the cross, that is the death of our Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, some say this alone is the “Gospel.” Just the cross, the empty tomb is downplayed or ignored. Some who call themselves Christians don’t even celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. With them, the Resurrection isn’t “Gospel.” For them the Good News is summarized as: “Christ died for you. Christ gave Himself into death for your sins. On the cross, Jesus died in your place as your vicarious sacrifice to cleanse you and forgive you.” Now, in and by itself, this is not a false statement, for indeed the very words of Jesus from the cross, *“It is finished”* declares the atonement is a *fait accompli* (an accomplished fact). As I said on Good Friday, it is completed, perfected, the mission accomplished. The redemption price has been paid. The world’s sins are atoned for. The work of reconciliation and peacemaking is accomplished, and the Law has been fulfilled. But this isn’t the complete Gospel. The complete Gospel includes God’s affirmation that His promise in Christ has been fulfilled. And this happens on this blessed day, the Day of the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Therefore not to understand the significance of our Lord's resurrection presents a real problem. His resurrection from the dead is vitally important in the record of our Lord's ministry on earth. Without it we are robbed of the comfort and strength we receive from God by not believing the Gospel in its entirety.

The Good News of the Gospel is the narrative account of God's deeds in Christ Jesus for the salvation of the world. This narrative obviously doesn't end with the crucifixion of Christ and His burial in a tomb. It continues through His resurrection and His ascension. Thus, our Lord's resurrection is the account of His glorious return from the dead. It is affirmation of His own proclamations. It is the indispensable conclusion of His ministry on earth. Without Easter there is no story, no Good News, no Gospel.

Throughout the narrative of the written gospels there are numerous texts pointing to the importance of this great event in the history of mankind. Often Jesus spoke of this great event saying that He will be killed and ***"after three days he will rise"*** (Mk. 8:31; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:34). He also said on more than one occasion that He would be crucified or killed and, ***"he will be raised on the third day"*** (Matt. 16:21; Matt. 17:23; Matt. 20:19; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:33). On no less than three separate occasions our Lord informed His apostles this would happen. Furthermore, we are also told that one of the witnesses at our Lord's trial told the Sanhedrin that Jesus had said this, and the angel at the tomb asked, ***"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."*** (Luke 24:5-7, ESV) Yet it appears that so many calling themselves Christian have forgotten these words of Jesus. Therefore, let us not be like these forgetful ones or Mary Magdalene, sorrowful or unbelieving, but rather let us be joyful knowing that our Lord Jesus has risen from the dead as He promised and understand what this resurrection truly means for the children of God.

When our Lord was raised from the dead, God, by this glorious act, declared that the work of His Son on the Altar of the Cross; taking the sins of the world upon Himself, suffering the full wrath of God for our sins, thereby atoning for our sins, is indeed a fait accompli (an accomplished fact). But now in the resurrection, God declares that all mankind is to be regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal. Thus, the task His Son accomplished on the cross is now given public and everlasting recognition. St. Paul teaches this gracious reconciliation and justification in his letter to the Romans, saying, ***"It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."*** (Romans 4:24-25, ESV)

The resurrection brought us God's divine justification. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ willed God to pour out His objective justification upon all mankind, thereby fulfilling His promise of the cross. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on this glorious first day of the week is God's pronouncement that out of His abundant mercy, He absolves all sinners for the sake of His beloved Son. On the cross God imputed our sins to His Son. Thus, Christ took our sins upon Himself to be counted as His sins (2 Cor. 5:21) and there He took the punishment for our sins. Our forefathers taught, ***"As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him."*** In the resurrection Christ was absolved by God for our sins imputed to Him, and thereby we too are absolved. The justification that is Christ's, is then imputed to us individually through faith (subjective justification).

To be certain, this glorious Resurrection Day in the overall narrative of the Gospel is as important as Good Friday, for it is the divine outcome of our Lord's meritorious work upon the Altar of the Cross.

The Gospel is indeed the Good News of what God did in and through Jesus Christ, which means that *Easter* must be proclaimed, not just Good Friday. What a joyful ending to such a sorrowful death. Raised to life again! The God/Man Jesus is who He proclaimed to be. He is the Son of God whose life, death, and resurrection set man right with God, opening the door of heaven to all who believe. Therefore, Mary didn't really have a reason to cry, but she had forgotten the words of her Lord, "*after three days I will rise from the tomb.*" This is our joy today, for God's Son's resurrection from the dead points to the resurrection of all believers, pointing to our resurrection, on the Last Day.

His enemies worried that the disciples would steal His body and thus claim His resurrection. With the body of Jesus only buried and not raised to life, everything would be different. Our Lord's enemies would have been correct, making Jesus wrong. Making Him a fraud. Which in view of the circumstances appeared to be the case.

Our Lord gave His life on the Altar of the Cross. He died there hanging on that cursed tree. His body was taken down and placed in a tomb, partially prepared for burial. He had been abandoned by His followers, even by God Himself. No doubt, Jesus was dead! If He would have stayed that way, the story of His life would have been over, and the Law would not have been fulfilled. But He didn't stay that way! No, the kingdom of God had come among His people in the life of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and it would not depart with His Son's death. To the contrary, in His resurrection the kingdom of God is fully expressed, His desire that all men should be saved from the horrors of sin, death, and the devil are fully realized in the life, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

Sorrow turned to joy. This is the story of the resurrection. Repentance of sins now has more meaning than just our sorrow, it has God's promise that for the sake of His Son, He forgives us. This truth has great significance for our Baptism as we remember the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, "*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*" (Romans 6:4–5, *ESV*) Furthermore, we recall the words of Job, "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.*" (Job 19:25–27, *ESV*) We also recall the words of Jesus, "*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*" (John 6:39–40, *ESV*) And again when Jesus told Martha that her brother Lazarus would rise again, St. John says, "*Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,'*" (John 11:24–25, *ESV*)

Sorrow turned to joy. Just as death could not hold our Lord, it will not hold you. Forty days after His resurrection our Lord ascended into heaven with the promise to return. On the night He was betrayed, our Lord told His apostles, "*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*" (John 14:1–3, *ESV*) He

will return on the Day of the Resurrection of the Dead, the Last Day, to give you a new glorified and immortal body that you may be with Him for all eternity. As St. Paul says, ***“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”*** (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, ESV) The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a day of triumph, a day of triumphant joy.

Do not be Sad, but Joyful! The day of our resurrection to life eternal is coming. Until that day we are commanded by the Risen Lord, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:19–20, ESV) This command comes from the resurrected Christ, the only begotten Son of God who said to us, ***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*** (Matthew 28:18, ESV) That authority raised Him from the dead, and that authority will raise each of you on the Last Day. Alleluia, He is Risen! (Congregation response) *“He is risen indeed! Alleluia!”* In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.