

## **Jesus, the Resurrected King**

1 Corinthians 15:14

### **Slide 1**

Every year thousands of people climb a mountain in the Italian Alps where they pass the "stations of the cross" in order to stand at an outdoor crucifix.

A tourist, noticing a little trail that led beyond the cross, fought through the rough thicket and, to his surprise, came upon another shrine. A shrine that symbolized the empty tomb.

The shrine, overgrown with brush, displayed years of neglect. It seems that the pilgrims had only gone as far as the cross and no further.

What's the moral of this story? Too many people get to the cross and only see despair and heartbreak. Too few move beyond the cross to find the real message of Easter---the empty tomb.

But what about us. Every Christmas we gather in amazement that Jesus would leave the splendor of heaven and come to our little planet, to become human and experience life here on earth.

Then, a few months later, we celebrate Good Friday. We're amazed that Jesus would die on the cross for our sins; that He would take the punishment we deserve and die in our place.

Finally, we come to today, Easter, or "Resurrection Sunday." The climax, the highest point and culmination of Jesus' ministry.

Now we celebrate! Not just that Jesus came to earth. Not merely that He died. BUT... that He rose from the dead!!!

If Jesus had only come to earth, He'd merely have been a visitor, like God on a holiday.

If He had only died, He'd merely have been a religious teacher, another Buddha or Mohammed.

But He didn't just come to earth, and He didn't just die on a cross. He rose from the dead!

That's the excitement of Christianity; that's the uniqueness of our faith! As the hymn says:

I serve a RISEN Savior; 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, Christ Jesus lives 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.

We've heard this story many times and I hope we never tire of hearing the words, "He Is Risen!"

I hope we never cease to be amazed, to be awestruck, at the incredible fact that death couldn't hold the Lord of Life.

And, most of all, I hope we never miss this simple fact, Jesus is alive today.

That's what I want to talk about this morning; the fact that Jesus is alive. At Christmas, we just celebrate an instant, a moment in time.

We do the same thing on Good Friday; we remember a single moment in history.

But the resurrection is different. It's not just something that happened at a moment in time but it's a new daily reality.

When we say, “He is Risen,” we don’t just mean that at a moment in time Jesus came back to life, but we mean He’s Alive Today. Right now. At this very moment. And that changes everything.

Paul is incredibly blunt in 1 Corinthians 15:14 when he writes, *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”*

So, what does it mean for us that Jesus is Risen? Let me suggest four things that I see in the resurrection:

## **Slide 2**

First, there’s Love in the Resurrection. 1 John 4:9 says, *“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”*

We see the extent of God’s love for us as we reflect on Jesus’ death on the cross. But it doesn’t end there!

The love of God didn’t leave Jesus in the tomb, and us in despair, it raised Jesus back to life so that, as John writes, *“we might live through him.”*

Love hates death. Love struggles against death and in the resurrection of Jesus, love overcomes death.

The love in the resurrection isn’t just expressed in terms of God’s love for us. The love we find in the resurrection overflows from us to others.

1 John 3:14 says, *“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.”*

We know that we participate in the resurrected life of Jesus because it spills over into our relationships with one another, even to those who are difficult to love.

In fact, Jesus prayed that the world would know we were His disciples by the depth of our love for one another.

This resurrection love needs to characterize all of our conversations. It needs to be the central part of our interactions with one another.

And by saying this I don't mean just the happy, easy, nice part of love, but also the confrontational part; the part that says, "*because I care about you, I want to say...*"

There are two extremes here. On the one hand we sometimes don't want to say anything because we don't want to meddle or upset someone; that isn't love!

On the other hand, I see and hear about people who say something but harshly and critically; that isn't love either!

True love, the love of God, finds the middle place; where you can say what needs to be said in a loving way.

That's what the resurrection of God calls us to; to love one another. To abandon our needs and desires so that we might lift up one another.

God's Kingdom cannot sustain harsh, critical, and unloving words. These words need to be replaced with the incredible love of God that raised Christ from the dead.

That's what will grow a strong bride of Christ, and that's what will be irresistible to those outside of Christianity.

As I look around our world, I think it's love that we need most. Have you ever seen the movie, *AI (Artificial Intelligence)*? It came out about 2001.

It's set in the future, where a company created a human robot child with the ability to love unconditionally.

In many ways it's a disturbing movie, posing a number of difficult questions about what it means to be human and what the limits of our dependence on technology should be.

But probably the most poignant question that comes to mind while watching the movie is, *"To what extent will we go to find love?"*

The thread that runs through this movie from start to finish is encapsulated by a question the robot-boy repeatedly asks, *"Then will mommy love me?"*

It's perhaps the deepest longing of our hearts, to be loved. And it's the first thing I find in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

If you're searching, striving, or dying to be loved, come to the empty tomb. But, first you need to go to the cross, and see the love and forgiveness on the face of God.

But don't stay there; you need to come and meet the resurrected Jesus, Who's risen and alive today. Then you'll discover love beyond what you could ever imagine.

### **Slide 3**

Next, there's life in the resurrection. What would death be like if Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead?

What would it be like to be at the side of a loved one when they died without any knowledge that there's life beyond the grave?

I can't imagine the desperation, but I don't have to try! For there is life! There is victory! All because Jesus rose from the dead.

Victor Hugo, the French novelist, is perhaps best known for *Les Miserables (lei miz ra ba)*, wrote these words: *"For half a century I have been translating my thoughts into prose and verse: history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song;*

*all of these I have tried. But I feel I haven't given utterance to the thousandth part of what lies with me.*

*When I go to the grave I can say, as others have said, "My day's work is done." But I cannot say, "My life is done." My work will recommence the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight but opens upon the dawn."*

Romans 6:4-5 says, *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."*

We'll be united with Jesus in His resurrection life. In fact, that's exactly what happens at the exact moment we respond in faith to God.

Jesus described it as a "new birth." 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

Do you know that resurrection life? Romans 8:11, *"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."*

That's what God freely offers to us, new life. He offers the chance for us to participate with Jesus in the life that comes through the resurrection.

Jesus is alive today. He's here, right now, according to His promise. And He brings with Him the gift of life.

His hand is outstretched at this very moment. He won't force it on you, He won't shove it down your throat, but He'll freely offer it. Life eternal.

## Slide 4

Next, I see hope in the resurrection. The fact that there's life in the resurrection is the source of the third thing: Hope.

I have hope because Jesus rose from the dead. One of the recent hymns of the faith says, *"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow; I can face uncertain days because He lives."*

The resurrection gives us hope for today, hope for tomorrow, and hope for eternity. Hope that things can change. Hope that even if they don't change, and the worst happens and death comes, that it's not the end!

There's more life after that, a better life after that; life without sickness, pain or tears.

Life without ever having to wonder, *"Lord, where are you?"* because we'll see Him with our eyes, touch Him with our hands, and never worry or fret again.

I know many of us are afraid to die. It seems so final, so horrible, so unavoidable. But in the resurrection of Jesus I find hope, hope for something greater, something better, something eternal.

We know that Jesus lives today. This affects how we live and how we die. Jesus' resurrection forever changed Christians' view of death.

Rodney Stark, a sociologist at the University of Washington, points out that when a major plague hit the ancient Roman Empire, Christians had surprisingly high survival rates. Why?

Well, most Roman citizens would banish any plague-stricken person from their household. But, because Christians had no fear of death, they nursed their sick instead of throwing them out on the streets.

So, when the moment of death comes to us, we have hope. We know that Jesus will be right there with us; His presence right at our side. We don't go through it alone; we go through it with Him.

A missionary in Brazil discovered a tribe of Indians in a remote part of the jungle, near a large river.

The tribe was in need of medical attention due to a contagious disease that was ravaging the population. People were dying daily.

A hospital was just across the river, but the Indians wouldn't cross it because they believed the river was inhabited by evil spirits. To enter the water meant certain death.

The missionary explained how he had crossed the river and was unharmed. They weren't impressed. He then took them to the bank and placed his hand in the water. They still wouldn't go in.

He walked into the water up to his waist and splashed water on his face. It didn't matter. They were afraid to enter the river. Finally, he dove into the river, swam beneath the surface until he emerged on the other side.

He punched a triumphant fist into the air. He had entered the water and escaped. It was then that the Indians broke out into a cheer and followed him across. That's what Jesus did for us with death.

He entered it, made it safely to the other side, and punched a triumphant fist into the air.

But here's the thing, Jesus didn't stay on the other side of the bank. He jumped back in, and swam back to our side.

He's alive, and present with us. When our turn comes to face death, I believe He takes us by the hand and swims across with us, safely to the other side.

*1 Peter 1:3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*



Because He lives, we have hope.

### **Slide 5**

Lastly, I want to remind us that there's power in the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 6:14, *"By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."*

You see, the simple point that winds its way through each of the things I've talked about, is that Jesus is alive. He's alive right now, with us, walking beside us.

He didn't rise from the dead and then take off to heaven, to come back again someday.

He's alive and with us through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. And because of that, His power is available to us.

The same power that raised Him from the dead is the same power that'll raise us, too. That power is here for our daily lives, and God desires us to experience it more deeply.

It's here to enable us to have victory over sin; it's here to bring us hope and encouragement; it's here to shine through us to the world around us, and it's here to enable us to worship and celebrate.

And Jesus is alive, too. HE's here to enable us to have victory over sin, HE's here to bring us hope and encouragement.

HE's here to shine through us to the world around us. HE's here to enable us to worship and celebrate.

This morning it's my prayer that you would know the risen Jesus. That you would know the love, the life, the hope, and the power of the resurrection.

That's the simple message of our faith, Jesus is Alive!

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

About 1930 the Communist leader Bukharin journeyed from Moscow to Kiev. His mission was to address a huge assembly; his subject was "atheism."

For a solid hour he aimed his heavy artillery at Christianity, hurling argument after argument heaped on top of ridicule.

When he finished, he looked over the crowd to what he thought was the smoldering ashes of men's ruined faith.

*"Are there any questions?"* he demanded. A solitary man rose and asked permission to speak.

He mounted the platform and moved close to the Communist. The audience was breathlessly silent as the man surveyed them first to the right, then to the left.

At last he shouted the ancient Orthodox greeting, "CHRIST IS RISEN!" The vast assembly arose as one man and the response came crashing like the sounds of an avalanche, "HE IS RISEN INDEED!"