

Resurrection Sunday 12 April 2020

What an appropriate time for us to think about the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

John 11:25 “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives believing in me will never die. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?’”

We can talk about many things today. We have been talking about many things and about the same thing in different ways. Our minds and time have been taken up and consumed with this virus that appears have brought the world to its knees.

Satan, in this battle to take the throne, must have thought the same thing. That he had brought Heaven to its knees when Jesus died on the cross.

When Christ uttered the words “It is finished!”, when Jesus said “ Father, why have you forsaken me!”. I am sure the enemy of our souls thought, “Yes!!! This is it, finally heaven has surrendered!”

Now, please enter the story, this true story, not a fable or a fantasy, but a true story, with me.

We know from Scripture and multiple prophecies that Jesus had to die. We understand that we needed a Redeemer.

But do we know what happened while Jesus was dead? It could have been fairly simple and straightforward. Jesus could have died, for all to see. Then He could have come to life before sunset that same day to share the Sabbath with His Family.

But he was in a grave for a few days. Why?

Let’s read from Colossians 2:13-15

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive in Christ. He forgave all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Verse 15: And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross “! Hallelujah!!!

I love the song “I Raise a Hallelujah” The first verse says:

I raise a Hallelujah in the presence of my enemies

I raise a Hallelujah, louder than this unbelief

I raise a hallelujah, my weapon is a melody

I raise a Hallelujah, Heaven has come to fight for me!

What do you do in the presence of your enemies? Do you praise God?

What do you do with the doubt, the unbelief that God has got this, the unbelief that sometimes raises its head? Do you praise God as a response?

Every thing that happens to us requires a response. On this Resurrection Sunday, how will we respond to the facts that Jesus died, made a public spectacle of Satan, broke the curse of death and was raised to life again?

This was what was happening while Jesus was dead. He visited the powers of hell and the authorities of death, took back the keys to eternal life and then, only once that was done, did he shake off those grave clothes and got up, and was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Resurrection means a 'raising up', or 'rising up' from the Greek word ANASTASIS. In the verb form it means 'to cause to stand or rise up; to raise from sleep or from the dead'.

Yes, I am in awe of this God, my Redeemer and the Saviour of the whole world. HE IS AWESOME AND WORTHY TO BE PRAISED!!

Coming back to our original verses where Jesus is talking to Martha before he resurrected Lazarus, her brother. He said:” I am the resurrection and the life...Do you believe this?

I love questions and I love the questions both God and Jesus ask all the time in the Bible.

Do you believe this? Differently asked: what do you believe?

Before you leap into a Yes I Do, think deeply about the question. Like King David in Psalm 139, ask the Lord to search your heart, to test your anxious thoughts, to do a complete inventory of your motives, and then, answer the question.

The Truth is HE IS RISEN and HE IS RISEN INDEED.

Today, have a conversation with the Risen Christ.

For those who struggle to believe that Christ is indeed the Risen Lord, let’s read **1 Corinthians 15:3-6**.

Paul wrote the following “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at the same time...”

This is the key event in the New Testament where it is proclaimed throughout. All four Gospels report the miraculous event. In Matthew 28:6 the angel declared "He is not here: for he is risen!" Mark 16:6 reports "'Don't be alarmed,' [the angel] said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.'"

In Luke 24:46-48, the risen Jesus gave His disciples a greater understanding of the resurrection when He told them: "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." Jesus foretells of His resurrection in John 16, then to one of the doubting witnesses, Thomas, He says the following in John 20:29: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

“The Christ” What does it mean? The Bible speaks of Jesus as “the Christ,” meaning “the anointed one,” the Messiah. When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter answered, “You

are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). At Jesus’ interrogation by the Jews just before His crucifixion, the high priest demanded, “Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” (Matthew 26:63). And Luke records that on one occasion when Jesus cast demons out of individuals, the demons cried out, “ ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ and He [Jesus] rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ” (Luke 4:41).

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’

Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ ” (Luke 4:17-21).

Jesus read these words from Isaiah 61, a prophecy of the coming Messiah, and then He said that He was the One to whom this prophecy referred. That He had been anointed to preach the gospel of salvation. That He was the Christ, the anointed One.

Today we remember and celebrate His resurrection from the dead, because today again we can say prophecy in Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

While Jesus was admired and praised as a teacher, healer, and for performing miracles, He was put to death on the cross. But God raised Him from the dead. Had the witnesses not believed what they saw, Christianity would not have spread across the globe and remained a profound belief to this day.

Jesus was honest with his disciples. John 16:20 records these words from him: “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.”

On this day, are we still grieving or are rejoicing?

Because of who Christ is, His words in Scripture far outweighs anything I can come up with.

Listen to Christ praying multiple times before the resurrection.

Jesus prayed for himself: John 17: 1 - 4

“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

For reflection: Jesus completed His work as given to Him by God the Father. Are we doing the work assigned or given to us?

Jesus prayed for his disciples: John 17: 6 – 19 records the whole prayer. I am reading only a few verses.

“I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – of the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one...

My prayer is not that you take them out of this world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world as I am not of it.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be sanctified.”

What does it mean to be sanctified? To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God's design and purpose.

For reflection: Are we living our lives according to God’s design and purpose?

Jesus prayed for all believers: John17:20-26

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me.

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

For reflection: What does Christ mean when He says “I have given them GLORY? What is glory? Glory is the manifested presence of God.

I think it was Dr Myles Munroe who said: Everywhere we turn, we are surrounded by glory. There is glory in every tree and flower. There is the splendour in the rising and setting sun. Every living creature reflects its own glory. Man in his own way through his actions and character expresses an essence of glory. But the glory that we see in Creation is but the barest reflection of the greater glory of the Creator.

Glory is one of the buried treasures of lost humanity. It is an imprisoned splendour.

The **Purpose** and the Power of **God's Glory** delivers the keys for releasing that glorious life in a manifested demonstration of spiritual living and creative work.

Christ left us with many gifts. His gift of love of giving Himself. His gift of sanctification. His gift of oneness with Him and with the Father. His gift of glory. And his gift of access to God the Father and to eternal life.

How will you respond? His question to Martha requires a response from all of us today.

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Let’s pray:

Heavenly Father, we praise You, our Everlasting Father, our Great and Awesome God. We glorify You for Your Almighty power that raised Jesus Christ from His death. We thank You for Your great plan of salvation for us through His life, death and resurrection, paving the way for us to have new life with You. All praise to You for Your Great love for humanity.

Thank You for giving us a Lord, a Conqueror, Victor, Redeemer, Deliverer and a Friend in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

I would encourage you today to set time apart to have a deeper reflection on the questions I asked throughout this message. Use them as starting points for having a meaningful conversation. Talk to the people in your bubble or call someone or have a family zoom or a small group zoom meeting.

The last five Psalms all start with these words: "Praise the Lord!" Do you think they're trying to send us a message?

On this Resurrection Sunday, let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to God.

May God's blessings flood your soul, your spirit and your mind today. Or in the words of my friend "May the love of God be a cloak around you.

God bless.