

The voice of the angel echoes through the ages: "Why are you seeking the living among the dead? He is not here. Christ is risen!" May the Spirit lead us to respond, "Yes, he is risen indeed!" Amen.

### 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

<sup>51</sup>Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— <sup>52</sup>in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup>"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" <sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the first time in a month and a half we are no longer in the Lenten season. The last time we could say that was way back on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. On that date we celebrated the Transfiguration of Our Lord. Do you remember the glimpse of God's glory that we saw that day as we watched with Peter, James and John on the mountaintop? For a short time Jesus let his divinity shine forth as he talked there with Moses and Elijah. In a sense the disciples were experiencing heaven on earth. They were in the presence of God's glory. It's no wonder then that they stood there dazed and amazed. Do you remember what Peter said as these miraculous events unfolded before him? Overwhelmed by what was happening, the usually talkative Peter could only say to Jesus, "**Rabbi, it is good for us to be here**" (Mark 9:5).

As dawn breaks on this Easter Sunday can we say anything less than "Lord, it is good for us to be here." But why is it good? Oh yes, there certainly is something nice about joining together with our brothers and sisters in the faith at this unusual hour to welcome a day filled with joyful celebration. But why do we do what we do? My friends, it is more than tradition or curiosity that brings us here.

In response to the question, "Why is it good for us to be here?" Paul provides an answer this morning in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. On this Easter Sunday morning "**Death is Swallowed up in Victory**" -- that's why it is good for us to be here! Death is swallowed up in victory! The Apostle reminds us that although death pursues us relentlessly, Christ is victorious.

#### I.

A pastor was hurrying to his early service on an Easter Sunday when his car suddenly stopped running. Not wanting to be late for the service, he rushed to a nearby phone and called the operator for help. With his mind on that Easter service, he momentarily forgot himself and responded to the operator's "hello" with the Easter greeting, "Christ is risen." To which the somewhat surprised operator responded, "Oh, is he *really*?" That, unfortunately, is the response of too many people on this Easter Sunday morning. In response to our joy-filled cry of "Christ is risen," they can only say, "so what."

Many people don't see that Easter is important. In the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul spends the entire chapter telling us why Easter is important and why it is good for us to be here. To see the importance of Easter we need to recognize that death is pursuing us relentlessly.

The triumph of Easter morning began with what appeared to be defeat. On Good Friday it appeared that Satan had won the battle which had begun in the Garden of Eden. Ever since the Fall into sin, everyone has been and still is born with sin. We are all terminally ill with the disease. Sin changed the life that God created. Sin brings death. Paul summarizes the relationship between sin and death, when he writes, "**The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.**"

How do we feel about Easter this morning? When we look at the pain, the misery, the unfulfilled hopes and dreams in our lives, deep down inside we are also inclined to respond to the Easter message with "so what."

Death pursues us throughout our lives and there is nothing that we are able to do to save ourselves. That is a pretty gloomy message. God's purpose, however, is not to make us more miserable. God wants us to turn our attention to the deliverance that he has provided. And that is why it's good for us to be here.

Today we see the glorious results of God's plan to save us. Death is swallowed up in victory because Easter proclaims that Christ is victorious.

## II.

Once sin came into the world, there was only one way to undo what had happened. Sin had to be removed and the only way that sin could be removed was to have someone else take the sting of sin in our place. That was Jesus' mission. He is our substitute and when Jesus rose on Easter Sunday morn, his resurrection guaranteed that our victory over sin and death is complete.

Jesus is the key. Jesus himself said, "**Because I live, you also will live**" (John 14:19). The Savior also announced, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die**" (John 11:25). Paul proclaims this same truth in our text when he writes, "**Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" By the power of his resurrection we share in his unending, glorious life. What a life we have to celebrate! What a Savior we have!

Christ's resurrection, however, does not simply point us to what we will one day enjoy. Christ's victory makes it possible for us to live as Christ's children already now. Paul explains that in his letter to the Colossians when he says, "**Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory**" (3:1-4).

To this point we have not been privileged to see the risen Savior, but with Peter we can say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Today and every day God still gives us, we know that Christ is risen. Death has been swallowed up in Christ's victory. Although sin still troubles us and death still threatens us, we will share in the victory that he won for us. For Christ is risen; he is risen indeed. Amen.

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Easter Sunrise Meditation

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