

2016-17-23 Luke 24:1-8 **Turn to Jesus for Resurrection and Life!** Easter April 16, 2017

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God's grace and peace are guaranteed to us through our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We hear the greatest message that the world can learn from Luke 24:1-8

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Give us certainty in all situations of life and death. Your Word...

Dear Christians, in the living Savior,

What are your plans for Easter? Perhaps you'll get together with family or friends, have a nice meal, and relax. But as Christians, we have so much more to consider at Easter. We expect to hear songs of praise that the Lord has risen! Easter is a day of certainty! The early followers were at first shocked by the news that Jesus had risen. But that message was just what they needed! We need the same message: "*Christ has ... been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Each in his own turn....*" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) Although Easter can be such a busy time, what a blessing to gather together this morning to be refreshed by the message of Easter!

Turn to Jesus for Resurrection and Life!

1. A lack of faith has low expectations. Many today outside the church and sadly some pastors in churches teach that the accounts of Jesus' rising to life are false. They do not realize the grief that will come from their teaching. They ask: What if the Romans guarding the tomb ran away in the earthquake and the women were delusional and the angels didn't exist? What if Jesus lied when He predicted His rising from death and the historian Luke got it all wrong? Paul wrote, "*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*" (1 Corinthians 15:17) If Jesus is still dead, then we've got a big problem because: "*the wages of sin is [our] death.*" (Romans 6:23) If Jesus is not physically alive, we have no help when die.

If Christ is still dead, then there is no hope for our future. Paul wrote, "*If...Christ has not been raised, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.*" (1 Corinthians 15:16, 18) If Christ is dead, we have no one to keep us from going to a dreadful eternity! Paul says, "*If [He] has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith*" (1 Corinthians 15:14). If Jesus is still in His grave, then our worship is foolishness and our trust in Christ is empty. If Christ has not been raised, then we might as well just forget about appeasing God because without the living Christ we cannot be saved.

Knowing what is at stake, let's be sure of the truth. Luke's account of the first Easter morning began with what would have been expected of Jews after someone died: "*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*" (v.1) Jesus had died on late Friday afternoon. His friends rushed to get Him buried before the Sabbath began. Jesus' body was hastily wrapped with spices and placed in a nearby tomb. The women had seen where the tomb was and the huge stone rolled in front of it. Then, they observed their Sabbath rest, which must have been a terrible time for them. At sunrise on Sunday, these women went to the tomb to give Jesus a proper burial. They planned, when they arrived, to lovingly clean the blood off his body, sprinkle it with spices, wrap it with clean linen, gently set it on the stone ledge in the tomb, and place a burial cloth on His face. After such a terrible death, they thought, at least His body would rest in peace in the tomb. Then they planned to return to a life without Jesus! If Luke would have ended his account here, we could join the atheists in not celebrating Easter. If there was no resurrection, then our dreams for heaven are foolishness!

But the women were shocked when they arrived at the tomb. "*They found the stone rolled away.*" (v. 2) Who could have gone to the tomb earlier than them? Who would have opened the grave? "*When they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.... The men said to them, 'Why do you look for*

the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."" (v. 3-7)

Instead of grave cloths, the women saw men dressed in dazzling light! Instead of a cold body, they saw angelic messengers. The rock slab, where Jesus' lifeless body lay, became the first Easter pulpit. The angel gladly proclaimed: "*He is not here; he has risen!*" (v.6) The beaten and crucified body of Christ lived anew! The angels reminded the women: "*Remember how he told you!*" (v.8) Whether people today remember that Jesus bodily rose from death or not, it does not change the fact that He actually rose! We must turn away from any doubts or disbelief and turn in joy to Jesus who is the resurrection and the life!

2. Jesus' rising goes far beyond all expectations! The crucified One lives! Luke interviewed many eye witnesses who saw Jesus alive. The women weren't dreaming. They saw Jesus. God's angels were sent to tell the greatest truth of all time! Since we have a living Savior, our sin has been forgiven, death has been defeated; the devil cannot claim our souls, and our bodies will be raised to life by Christ on the last Day! The experiences in life do not lead us to a high outlook of Easter, but Easter truth leads us to what we need!

We need God's forgiveness! Jesus died on the cross to pay sin's price. Easter is the proof that Jesus' work is complete! The Bible states, "*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*" (Romans 4:25). Jesus died and rose again to proclaim forgiveness for every sin!

We need His help against death! A person buried in a grave seems final. But death and the grave are not the end. Our living Christ has defeated death. Because Jesus lives, we can be sure that death is only a sleep. My alarm clock wakes me up every morning. But on the last Day, the angels that Jesus sends out will sound the trumpet call of victory to wake all the dead. What a sound it will be! We believers with our own eyes will see Jesus, who gives life. He promised, "*Because I live, you also will live!*" (John 14:19)

We need hope in life. Life can be discouraging. We pray about our problems before we go to bed but they still are there in the morning. There are times when God seems so far away, while our troubles are ever near. But our living Savior gives us true hope for life now and for eternal life. Our Lord works everything for our eternal good to prepare us for eternal life. Turn to Jesus for hope in life!

So what are we expecting to receive as we celebrate Easter? The answer depends on what we believe about Jesus' resurrection. If His victory over death means nothing to us, then there is no reason for us to worship Him. And the best we could expect from Easter is a good meal, some candy and eggs, and perhaps a good nap. But if Christ has been raised bodily and powerfully from death, then we have every reason to worship Him! And the best we can hope for doesn't begin to describe what He offers: full forgiveness for all of our sins, complete removal of all our guilt, God's truth that drives away our doubts, eternal life that drives away death forever, joy as we live with Jesus now and for eternity, and glory in heaven for our own bodies that will *be like His glorious body.* (Philippians 3:21)

Until that last Day, may our Lord Jesus keep us in a living Easter faith: a faith that continually turns to our living Jesus for resurrection and life! Jesus has risen! He has risen, indeed! Hallelujah! Amen.