

Osaka International Church
Bradford Houdyshel

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Title: "Christ is Risen Indeed!"

Key verse: Matthew 28:5-7 (NIV) – "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you'."

Leader: Christ is risen!

Congregational response: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Kirisuto Fukkatsu!

Congregational response: Jitsu ni Fukkatsu!

Good morning, everyone.

This sentence – "Christ is risen!" – is a common greeting on Easter morning when Christians gather to celebrate the most consequential event in human history: the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave. On that first Easter morning two thousand years ago, the women came to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. An angel appeared to them.

Matthew 28:5-6 (NIV) – "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay'."

Verse 6 again: *He is not here ... **he has risen** ... just as he said.*

In many Christian churches on Easter Sunday when the believers gather together at church, they greet each other with this greeting: "**Christ is risen!**"

And then there is the standard response: "**He is risen indeed!**" *He is risen indeed!*

That is the title of my message today: "Christ is risen indeed!" This is the heart of the Christian gospel: that Christ Jesus died on the cross for our sins and then He was raised from the dead, proving His victory over sin and death.

There were numerous witnesses to the resurrection. First, there were the women who went to the tomb that morning and found the tomb empty. Mark 16:1 (NIV) – "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

Verses 5-7: "As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶"Don't be alarmed," he 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. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

And so they went and told the disciples this incredible news.

More people saw the risen Jesus. Mark 16:12 (NIV) – "Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country."

These are the two men described in Luke chapter 24, who were walking on the road to the town of Emmaus. Jesus joined them on their journey, but they did not recognize Him until the meal time. After they recognized Him, they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

Let's read Luke 24:36-37 (NIV) – “While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.”

Verses 41-43 – “And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.”

Jesus ate some fish in their presence – a ghost or a spirit does not eat physical food. This was no ghost appearing to them – this was an actual, physical resurrection from the dead.

Christ is risen indeed!

There were other witnesses. Let's read what the Apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15:3-8 (NASB) – “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve.⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

Let me tell you a bit of my own Christian experience. I grew up going to church. But in my teenage years, I had doubts about whether the Christian message true. But after studying various issues, it was the testimony of these witnesses to the resurrection that so impressed me. These men and women proclaimed what they had seen and heard, and many of them became martyrs for sharing their testimony. These people were willing to die for this message. I have confidence in their testimony, and I have confidence in this book, the Bible. The Bible tells us where we came from, why we are in the condition we are in, what the solution is, and what our eternal destiny will be like. I became convinced that the Bible's witness is true, and so, during my second year of college, I went forward in an invitation at church and gave my life to Christ. That Sunday happened to be Palm Sunday. The first week of my born-again life was spent going to a series of Christian meetings during Holy Week, the period between Palm Sunday and Easter. So, this period of time has always been special to me ... for two reasons: it marks my own spiritual birthday, and the Easter celebration commemorates the central event in human history and the heart of the gospel message. This is the story I would like to share with you today: the triumph of Christ over sin and death.

On this Easter Sunday, I want to share with you an ancient Resurrection hymn which is still sung in many churches today. It goes like this:

Christ is risen from the dead
Trampling down death by death
And upon those in the tombs
Bestowing life

*Christ is risen from the dead ... trampling down death by His own death
And upon those in the tombs ... bestowing life*

What does it mean for Christ to “trample down death by His own death”? To answer this question, I would like to make three points.

Point #1 – Mankind has fallen into sin. You know the story of Adam and Eve and the choice to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit. God told Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 (NIV) – “And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” And when they ate of the fruit, they immediately felt shame and tried to hide themselves from God. This disobedience damaged our relationship with our Creator. And we are now subject to physical death.

Isaiah 59:2 (NIV) – “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

Romans 3:23 (NIV) – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

All of us have sinned and all of us are separated from our God. We are alienated from our Creator ... our relationship to Him is broken.

Point #2 – God has reconciled us to Himself through the crucifixion of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I told you at the beginning of today’s message that the most consequential event in human history is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave. Perhaps I should say that a bit differently. The crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection of Christ are Act 1 and Act 2 of the most consequential event in history. You can’t have one without the other. In the crucifixion, we have the sacrifice of Christ, which was necessary in order to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind and purchase our redemption. In the resurrection, we have the proof of the conquest over death.

Let’s look at the necessity of the crucifixion. The latter half of Hebrews 9:22 (ESV) says: “...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Next, look at 1st Peter 1:18-19 (ESV) – “Knowing that you were ransomed [redeemed] from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”

In the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 29 (NASB), John the Baptist says about Jesus, “...Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Jesus is the “Lamb of God.”

In the Old Testament system, in order to make a sacrifice you had to have a lamb or another animal that was without any spot or blemish. But the sacrificial system of those days was temporary, until the final sacrifice of the most perfect lamb of all, the Son of God, the Lamb of God.

Let’s look at Hebrews 10:1-4 (NIV) – “The [Old Testament] law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Verse 3 again: “But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.” In the Old Testament, these sacrifices were an annual reminder of sins. But now, the sacrificial system finds its consummation in the one-time sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:9-14 (NIV) – “Then he [Jesus Christ] said [to God the Father], “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first [the sacrifices of the old covenant] to establish the second [the new covenant under Christ]. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. [*Verse 10 again: ... we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*] ¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

Verse 14 again: For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. It is by the sacrifice of Christ that we are made holy, those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ.

Let’s look at Romans chapter 3, verse 24 and the first half of verse 25 (NASB) – “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, ^{25b} whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith...”

Our justification before God is a gift by God’s grace, through faith. By grace through faith. And through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The NIV Study Bible describes this section very nicely and I would like to quote from it:

Paul uses the Greek verb “justified” 27 times, mostly in Romans and Galatians. ... The term describes what happens when people believe in Christ as their Savior: From the negative viewpoint, God declares them to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, he declares them to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of their sin and credits righteousness to them. ...

There is great significance in what Jesus has accomplished on the cross. It is in this manner that He has restored our relationship with our Creator. A moment ago I said that the crucifixion is Act 1 of the most consequential event in human history and that the resurrection of Christ is Act 2 of that event. Without the resurrection, the accomplishments of the crucifixion are incomplete. The purpose of Christ coming to the earth was to save us from our sins and the consequences of our sins: death. It is through the crucifixion followed by the resurrection that this accomplished.

A few minutes ago, I told you that I wanted to share three points with you.

Point #1 – Mankind has fallen into sin.

Point #2 – God has reconciled us to Himself through the crucifixion of His Son, Jesus Christ.

And now: Point #3 – Christ has triumphed over death by His resurrection.

Again, that ancient hymn I shared with you earlier:

Christ is risen from the dead
Trampling down death by death
And upon those in the tombs
Bestowing life

What does it mean for Christ to “trample down death by His own death”?

I started to answer this a few minutes ago when I was describing how Christ’s death is the sacrifice for our sin, to reconcile us to God. Let me continue my answer by sharing with you one of my favorite quotes from the early church fathers.

St. Athanasius, the hero of the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, was a defender of the doctrine of the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity – fully God. But also, He became man – He was fully human. St. Athanasius wrote a book entitled “On the Incarnation” in which he outlines how and why the divine Son of God came to earth and took on human form (that’s what “incarnation” means: to take on human flesh). One of the reasons the Son of God did this is that only by taking on our human flesh could God redeem us human beings.

And here is the famous quotation from St. Athanasius that I want to share with you:
“What has not been assumed has not been redeemed.”

What has not been assumed has not been redeemed.

What this means is that only by coming to earth and taking on (“assuming”) human flesh could God redeem our mortal human flesh. Back in the Garden of Eden, the serpent had tempted Eve and she ate of the forbidden fruit and then gave it to Adam and he ate it also. Satan had tempted mankind to disobey God and so mankind was plunged into sin and alienation from God.

Romans chapter 5 and 1st Corinthians chapter 15 compare and contrast Adam and Christ. Through Adam, sin came into the world. Through Christ, the second Adam, redemption is made available to anyone who will follow Him.

Romans 5:12 (NASB) says this about Adam – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned...”

Sin and death entered the world through Adam’s sin, and since he was the representative of mankind at the beginning, so all mankind fell into sin and death.

But another Man enters the picture. Verse 15 – “But the gracious gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many.” By God’s grace, through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, comes a solution to mankind’s problem.

Verse 17 – “For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Death reigned because of Adam’s offense. But through Jesus Christ the gift of righteousness is offered. Please note the phrase: “**those who receive** the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.” You have to **receive** this precious gift in order to obtain these benefits and to reign with Christ.

Verse 18 – “So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind.” The “one act of righteousness” is a reference to either the death of Christ on the cross or to His whole life of perfect obedience, which includes His death. Through Adam’s offense, everyone who is “in Adam” is condemned (that means every human being). And through Christ’s act of righteousness, all who are in Christ receive justification – the last mention of “all mankind” doesn’t mean all human beings but only all who are in Christ, all who, as we saw a moment ago in verse 17, have received the gift offered, those who believe in Christ.

In 1st Corinthians 15, we read similar verses, and more. 1st Corinthians 15:20-21 (NASB) – “But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹ For since by a

man death came, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.” By Adam came death, but by Christ comes the resurrection of the dead. Christ is the “first fruits” of those who are asleep, those who have died. Christ is the first of those who experienced death who has now experienced the resurrection. And His deceased followers will likewise experience their own resurrection when He returns for them.

This is the promise, the hope, that we receive from Christ’s resurrection. This is the victory over death, Christ trampling down death by His death. This is why the resurrection is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection of Christ, there is no hope and no meaningful Christian message, as verses 12 to 19 in this chapter say.

Continuing on from verses 20-21, let’s read verses 22-23 – “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.” As I said before with Romans 5:17, here the “all” who are “made alive” are not every human being but all who belong to Christ. Here in verse 23, we read that Christ is the first fruits and after that those who belong to Christ will be raised when Christ comes back at the end.

Next: verses 24-26 – “Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to our God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”

Verse 26 again: *The last enemy that will be abolished is death.* This is the final victory.

Here on the PowerPoint screen, I have put a picture of the Eastern Orthodox icon of the Resurrection. I showed this to you last year in one of my messages, but I wish to show it to you again today, on this Resurrection Sunday (Easter).

Here we see the resurrected Christ standing on broken tombs, illustrating His defeat of death. He is standing on the gates of Hades, which He has broken down, showing that He has conquered death. Notice that those two broken gates form a cross, because the cross was the instrument Christ used to defeat death. And He is pulling Adam and Eve out of the grave. They are the original man and woman whose choice to eat the forbidden fruit plunged humankind into sin and death. But now death has been defeated and believers receive the promise of eternal life.



Let us return to our reading in 1st Corinthians.

Verses 35-37 – “But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” ³⁶ You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; ³⁷ and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.” This is interesting. What kind of body do we get? And the illustration Paul uses here is of a seed that is planted in the ground and dies. It does not come to life unless it dies first. That is what is going to happen to us. We will each die. And we will be buried. But our burial is like a seed that will grow again, grow into a healthy new plant. Actually,

let's read some more here and find out what it is that happens to us after the seed of our body is buried in the ground and then raised to new life.

Verses 42-44 – “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” Our old body is described here as “perishable.” And “sown in dishonor.” When I read this word “dishonor,” I think of the ways our bodies start breaking down as we enter middle age and old age ... or when our bodies are attacked by disease. But, our bodies will be raised in glory, in power. We will be raised with a “spiritual body.” I’m not sure what that will be like, a “spiritual body”. Perhaps it will be akin to what Jesus’ body was like after His resurrection, when He seems to be able to walk through closed doors. He did have a body that was recognizable, and He was able to eat. Is that what it means to have a spiritual body? I’m looking forward to finding out, after I die and my body is buried (sown to the ground) and then I am raised in the end.

Let's continue reading. 1st Corinthians 15:51-53 (NASB) – “Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Here is what happens at the end, when the last trumpet is sounded: the dead will be raised imperishable ... imperishable. We shall be changed ... in a moment. We shall put on immortality.

This is the victory that Jesus Christ secured with His death and resurrection. This is the victory that we will participate in ... those of us who have put our faith in Christ.

Verses 54-57 – “But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written [Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14]: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And the final verse of this chapter, verse 58 – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We are exhorted to be steadfast and immovable in our faith and our labor. We are to excel in the work of the Lord.

I’m going to close today’s message with one final passage on the work the Lord has given us to do.

2nd Corinthians 5:18-19 (NASB) – “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

Today is Easter Sunday, and I have shared with you the ways in which God has reconciled us to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and given us the promise of victory over sin and death which we find in the resurrection. Here in 2nd Corinthians we read that God has now given us “the ministry of reconciliation.” We are to bring this message of how to be reconciled to God to other people ... bring this message to our neighbors, our co-workers, our family members, anybody.

Verse 20 says we are “ambassadors for Christ.” We are ambassadors of the King, and we have a message of reconciliation to share with the rest of the world. Not only reconciliation with our Creator, but reconciliation with each other, for we all have done things to hurt others in one way or another, and we must remember to forgive each other, as the Lord’s Prayer and so many other passages tell us.

Be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to each other. If you want to hear more about how to be reconciled with your Creator, please talk to me or other members of our church after the service. We can tell you more and pray with you.

And now let us close with prayer.