

1 Easter Sunday – Luke 24:34

“The Lord really did rise!” – Luke 24:34

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

This is a joyful greeting, which is used by Christians on Easter throughout the world. It is a confident confession of the central truth of our faith. Jesus Christ truly has risen from the dead. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Where does this greeting come from? It comes from Luke chapter 24, and it is spoken by the two disciples to whom Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus. After they realized that the man who was talking to them was the risen Christ, they ran back to the others and said, “The Lord is risen indeed!”

But earlier in the day, these two men were not speaking with such confidence. Jesus had appeared to the women who had gone to the tomb early in the morning. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden where he had been buried. He then appeared to the rest of the women as they were making their way back to tell the disciples what the angels told them. He had apparently already appeared to Peter as well. But when Jesus saw these two disciples walking on the road, they were not filled with joy. They were sad and confused. They had hoped that Jesus would redeem Israel, but that hope was pretty much gone. Except they had heard that the women saw some angels who said that Christ was alive. And yet, they didn’t believe the women’s witness. Or at least, they found it very hard to believe.

Jesus therefore rebuked their unbelief and their hardened hearts. What were they not believing? It wasn’t just that they weren’t believing the women or the angels who appeared to the women. It wasn’t just that they didn’t know what to make of the empty tomb. Much more, it was that they were not trusting in the Scriptures. Jesus said, “How foolish you are and how slow to believe everything the prophets said! Didn’t the Christ have to suffer this and so go to his glory?” He then explained the Scriptures to them. Beginning with the books of Moses, Jesus showed these two men from the prophets, the Psalms, and from all the writings of the Old Testament that it was necessary for God’s Son to die and then rise from the dead on the third day.

It was when they were eating with him that Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment, the two disciples recognized Jesus. Their eyes were opened, and they saw the risen Lord. Immediately he vanished from their sight.

Then hindsight was 20/20 for them. “Didn’t our hearts glow,” they said to each other, “as he was talking to us on the way and explaining the Bible to us?” They then went back to the eleven disciples and said, “The Lord is risen indeed! And he has appeared to Simon!” Or as our translation puts it, “The Lord really did rise! And Simon saw him.”

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This Easter greeting is therefore an expression of faith conquering doubt. It is joy overwhelming sorrow. They didn't believe at first. They treated the witness of the women lightly. But they were wrong to do that. The women were right. The men should have listened to them. Because they were simply confessing what Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, and all the Scriptures said would happen. These disciples had been sad and uncertain. But now, because of the teaching of the Scriptures, their hope was restored. They were reassured in the confession that binds the disciples and all the Christian church together. The Lord is risen indeed! He really did rise from the dead!

Why do they also say that Simon Peter saw him? Maybe Jesus had told them this when they were walking to Emmaus. Or perhaps they met Peter on the way back from Emmaus. In either case, it was important to note that Simon Peter had seen the risen Lord. Because Simon Peter was an apostle. He, along with the other apostles, was chosen by the Lord to be his witness to the ends of the earth. Peter denied his Lord three times. Jesus had warned him that this would happen. But he had also assured Peter that he was praying for him, that Satan would not take him, and that he would not lose his faith. He said to Peter, "When you are restored, strengthen your brothers."

It was important to note that Peter had also seen the Lord, because it was the Lord's will for Peter and the other apostles to bear witness to this resurrection of Christ. As Peter and John said to the Jewish Council, "We cannot help but speak of the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Christ not only fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. He also made arrangements for the New Testament to be proclaimed and written down as well. The Lord really is risen! He really did fulfill the Scriptures. But not only that! He has also appeared to Peter and the apostles. From Galilee, he has sent them to proclaim his gospel to all nations. We therefore have this message of Christ, his life, his death, and his resurrection preserved for us even to this day. Now, through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in Jesus' name to all nations.

In this way, our Lord continues to open our ears to hear the Scriptures. To him all the prophets bear witness. When we open up our Bibles and read, when we listen to the Scriptures being proclaimed and explained, the risen Christ sends his Holy Spirit so that we can confess what we have been told so many times. We can hear and begin to understand for ourselves. Christ really is risen! This isn't just some tradition or cultural story. No, this is true. It really happened. And this means that he really did take away the sin of the world. He really did die for me. My sins really are forgiven. My baptism really did give me a new birth and a new life. This bread and wine in his Supper really are his body and blood. I

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really am nurtured by his words of grace and pardon. He has indeed given me his Holy Spirit. I am at peace with God the Father.

It's a shame when we don't believe those who speak the truth. It's easy to write them off as simply presenting their own opinions. The women at the tomb were not believed. A child is often ridiculed for just repeating what his parents told him. A pastor can be seen as just a guy gassing off or trying to preserve old, outdated traditions. It's the miserable plague, which infects our natural desires. People approach everything with skepticism and suspicion. What's your agenda? What's your aim? Whom are you trying to control? What are you not telling me?

But the Scriptures are not silent. They are not a closed book. Don't just take the women's word for it. Don't just take your parents' word for it. Don't just take the pastor's word for it. Search the Scriptures. See there in Isaiah 53, which speaks in detail of the Christ suffering and rising from the dead. See as early as Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth, that sin came into the world, and that he promised to send a Savior to be born of a woman. See right there in Psalm 118 that the Stone the builders rejected has become the chief Cornerstone. See in the words and lives of the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the sacrifice of Isaac, from the rise, fall, and redemption of David, all the way to the building and rebuilding of the temple. They all declare and foreshadow that God, in his Son, would come to make his dwelling with us, to be pierced for us, and to be exalted above all things.

See how Christ truly has fulfilled all that has been written. He truly is risen from the dead. He truly has atoned for all sins. As the Scriptures say, he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the preaching of his gospel (2 Tim 1:10). We really can depend on everything he says. As St. John writes, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he has testified of his Son" (1 John 5:9).

The resurrection of our Lord affirms and seals everything the Bible says. It opens up passages that at first seem closed. It sheds light on parts that seem at first to be dark. You don't need to go searching anywhere else than in the Scriptures. There is no secret, hidden knowledge stored away in caves or pagan literature. Even the archeological evidence that is discovered only affirms what the Bible has always said. It was necessary for God's anointed one to suffer, die, and rise on the third day. It was always God's intention and promise to forgive you of your sins, rescue you from death, and raise you up on the last day. See for yourself. Hear from the source of all saving truth. Learn from the pure fountains of Israel. Let the Scriptures ring out. And confess that sweet refrain, which God has given us. Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!* Amen.