

THIS IS LOVE – LOVE THAT CREATES ALL THINGS NEW

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

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TEXT: I Peter 1:3-9

When I was growing up, Easter was a very big event for our family. Of course, I always looked for the Easter Bunny and couldn't wait to see what was in my Easter basket sitting beside my bed every Easter morning. And then each year always brought a new Easter outfit, usually made by my Mother or a Great Aunt. And I always had to have new shoes – and a new hat, complete with white gloves and a special purse! One year – my mother surprised me and made my doll a new outfit to match my dress she had made for me. I wish I could have found a picture to show that – but I only have that picture in mind, I guess. I would so very proud to go to church with a matching outfit with my doll.

On the night before Easter, my father would get every pair of shoes that would be worn by my family to church. He would line them up in the bathroom and start polishing them all to look their best. And then on Easter morning – he would wake up and start singing with all his might, his favorite Easter hymn: *“Up from the grave He arose – with a mighty triumph o’er His foes.”* I knew from the time I was very little that Easter was a very special day – the most favorite day of the year for my parents. But it wasn't just because of the new clothes and sharp polished outfits. It really had nothing to do with Easter bunnies and presents. No – there was something so much more!

My parents knew that Easter – the resurrection – changes everything! It changed them when they confessed their faith in the risen Lord and were baptized. They were made into new creations in Christ and were given a new hope for living, a new purpose, and a new strength to face the trials of life. One of my mother's favorite Easter songs was: *Because He Lives*. Its lyrics really describe the kind of faith she and my father had. The chorus says: *Because He lives – I can face tomorrow. Because He lives – all fear is gone. Because I know who holds the future – life is worth the living – just because He lives.* They could face whatever suffering or pain they experienced in life – and in death – because they knew Jesus was alive!

What difference does the resurrection mean in *your* life? This past week I asked people that question on Facebook, saying: Fill in the blank: *“Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I am (or I have) _____.”* Think about that – how would you answer that question. Let me share what answers I received:

Because of the resurrection I am -

- Saved and have eternal Life.
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- I am at peace knowing my sins are forgiven and heaven awaits me.
- I am free and I am healed.

- I am a child of the King and have been adopted into His forever family.
- I am just visiting here.
- I am confident that ALL that was recorded in scripture is true and I too will rise to be with Him throughout eternity.
- I am forgiven and I get to go to heaven.
- I am resolved that God's eternal intent for all creation is to bring life out of death, joy out of grief, hope out of despair and grace out of all judgment.

Because of the resurrection, I know:

- Christ defeated death and I have a future in heaven with my Lord and my God.

Because of the resurrection, I have:

- Hope, peace and a second chance

Because of the resurrection:

- I love & believe that God & Jesus has taken my sins away. I have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. I have a friend that will never leave me & will always love me. He keeps his promises. I will serve him with the talents I've been given. I know that I will have an eternal life in heaven with Jesus, God, and everyone important to me.

How would *you* answer that question? Does the resurrection make a difference in *your* life? In Scripture we hear that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, so that we can live new lives. (Romans 6:4). But what's new in the new life? What specific things does God give us in this new life – what difference does it make?

The early Christians in Asia Minor – what is modern day Turkey – were going through times of trouble as they faced persecution. The Apostle Peter wrote a letter to these early Christians to encourage them and remind of the living hope they have because of the resurrection of Jesus. I believe these words can encourage us – especially as we go through these troubling times – to know God's help and hope.

Let's hear Peter's words, as found in I Peter 1:3-9. I've asked Erik Galvin to read our text today from the Message Bible. Listen to how Peter describes this new life and the hope we have in Christ.

³⁻⁵ What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole.

⁶⁻⁷ *I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it's your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory.*

⁸⁻⁹ *You never saw him, yet you love him. You still don't see him, yet you trust him—with laughter and singing. Because you kept on believing, you'll get what you're looking forward to: total salvation.*

And all God's people say, "Amen!" This is good news! What a Great God we have! *"Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now!"*

A brand-new life – and everything to live for! We have so much to be grateful for!

We have been given forgiveness and a new relationship! II Corinthians 5:21 says, *"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."* All of our sins have been washed away by His blood that was shed for us! God loves us so dearly that He sent Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins – so that we could have that new, right relationship with Him.

But you know, sometimes we doubt that we have this forgiveness and right relationship. We have a deceiver – the father of lies – that will whisper in our ears that our sin is too great – that there is a limit to the grace of God. We start to believe, "God could never forgive me."

But the good news is: There is no sin too great for the forgiveness of God. As writer Lauren Berg described it: *There is no darkness that His light cannot dispel. There is no cruelty that His gentleness cannot transform. There is no addiction that His power cannot tame. There is no lust that His faithfulness cannot purify. There is no greed that His generosity cannot quell. The death of Jesus has paid the penalty for the totality of our sin, and He freely offers forgiveness to all who put their trust in him.*¹

We can be confident that as we come to Jesus – He will forgive us – and give us a new and right relationship with Him. Jesus will break every chain and lift every burden and free us!

And the resurrection gives us a new purpose and reason for living. We have everything to live for! We no longer live for ourselves – but for Christ who gave His life for us. Galatians 2:20 says, *"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

When we open ourselves up to the work of the resurrected Lord in our lives – we will want to live for Him and be like Him. And what is amazing is that God gives us His resurrection power to live this life. Scripture tells us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that is available to us as we live our lives here on earth! So, we don't have

to be anxious or worried – because we have the risen Lord with us, and He will give us the strength and the help we need for the living of our days.

Sometimes we forget we have that power source – and so we try to run on our own energy and strength. And we just get tired – and stressed out. We were never meant to do that! God meant for you and me to be plugged into Him on a daily basis. Because of the resurrection – we know that nothing can ever separate us from Him – not even death itself. He is walking with us and is the power source we need to get us through life.

Maybe you've had times you've felt like giving up or just throwing in the towel. You wanted to give up on your job, or your marriage or your kids. You may feel so discouraged about your health or your finances. Or maybe the weight of the troubles in our world right now with the pandemic and the rising violence happening all around us it beginning to wear you down – and you're anxious about what the future holds. God wants you to hear this word today: "Don't give up. I will help you. Because I live – I am walking right beside you and will give you the strength you need to make it through. I will give you my living light to help you see in the darkness! And I can give you hope in the most hopeless of situations!"

Our new life in Jesus gives us the hope and promise of a past forgiven, a present strength and power – and a certain future home in heaven. We have a living hope that just as God raised up His Son Jesus Christ, God will raise us to new life as well! Because Jesus conquered death for us – we won't have to face it, only the shadow of death! As our Scripture today says: *God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole.* Truly this is the best gift of all – Victory in Jesus, for all eternity!

Once during a time when Martin Luther was greatly troubled, some of his friends saw him writing with his finger in the dust on the table, "He lives. He lives." Perhaps that is what we need to do when troubles invade our lives---we need to make a big sign and post it on our mirrors or even the dashes on our cars: "He lives. He lives! Because he lives, I can face tomorrow!"

INVITATION

We serve a risen Savior; he's in the world today. And because he lives, we can face tomorrow. God will provide the peace and strength and guidance we need. We don't have to be afraid anymore --- we have a God who provides for us --- because he lives, we can face tomorrow.

Jesus wants to come and walk with you and live within your heart. Won't you ask him to come into your heart today? He is waiting to enter your heart, why don't you ask him to come in today --- come and make your confession of faith in him. Come and make First Christian Church, your church home. Come and rededicate your faith in him. Come, as you are, and we will welcome you and rejoice with you in your decision. Won't you come now as we stand and sing?

RESOURCES:

¹Lauren Berg, “*My Sins are Too Great for God to Forgive*”, Blog. <https://thelife.com/my-sins-are-too-great-for-god-to-forgivehttps://thelife.com/my-sins-are-too-great-for-god-to-forgive>