

An Easter devotion with President Harrison

Transcribed from April 12, 2020 video.

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

I'm Pastor Matthew Harrison, President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans, "Christ was put to death for our transgressions, and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). When Christ spoke His last words on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He had completed a perfect life lived for us sinners, and a perfect death died for all the sins of all the people of all the world. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them," the apostle wrote in 2 Corinthians (5:21).

Christ's resurrection was an absolution for the world. All is accomplished. Paul continues, "God has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:19–20). Our reason for existence as Christians is to tell the world that "Christ is Risen!" And all that He has accomplished is for you. Believe it. It's yours.

Christ's resurrection is repeatedly tied to Baptism in the New Testament. Romans 6 says, "We were therefore buried with Christ by baptism into His death" (Rom. 6:4) — Christ's death. "For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His!" (Rom. 6:5). Your Baptism puts you together with Jesus. Like Jesus in this life, you will pass through many trials. Barring His return first, you and I shall follow Him into the grave. But as Jesus promised the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), so death for you means but paradise with Jesus. And even more, He will raise you up on the Last Day, to a physical, grab-your-friends-and-loved-ones, real, live eternity.

Jesus told His disciples before the fact, that He would be handed over to the authorities. He told them, "They will mock me, spit on me, flog me and kill me. But after three days I shall rise" (Mark 10:33–34). The resurrection confirms the truth of Jesus' claim to be God in the flesh. "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). And the resurrection confirms everything He and His apostles said and wrote for us in the New Testament.

So when I say to you, Christ is Risen, yours are the words of the risen Christ to Thomas in the fog of death and doubt, "Peace be with you. Put your finger here, and see my hands, and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not doubt, but believe" (John 20:27).

I say to you, in the midst of this global pandemic and global panic, the true words of the now risen Christ, "In this world you will have trouble. But I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In the midst of your trials, the words of Jesus to the paralytic are yours! "Take heart . . . Your sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:2).

In the face of death, Jesus says to you the very words He used to comfort Lazarus' family, "I am the resurrection and the life, though a man die, yet shall he live!" (John 11:25).

In the midst of your challenging vocations and your service to others, Jesus says to you, "Take up your cross and follow Me!" (Matt. 16:24). He knows the way. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

And when you get weary, He says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Pastors, when you cannot be at the bedside of the dying, count on the Word and promise of God, "My word will not return void." (Is. 55:11)

I was talking to a friend the other day. She said, "You know pastor, I don't know what God is doing in all of this, but I do know this. I love going to church. I love my pastor. I love receiving the Lord's Supper. And when I'm able to go back to church, I'm going to love all of them even more."

Amen, Come, Lord Jesus!

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Amen.



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