

“Alive in Christ”

Matthew 28:1-10

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia! A blessed and glorious Easter morning to you all as we gather to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The victory is won, and the tomb is empty! Thanks be to God for His unending mercy that flows forth from the cross and is solidified in the living and glorified Christ. The hope of your resurrection is no longer only hope. It is no longer a promise you must “wait and see” if it will come true. You have heard the Word of truth that Jesus has risen from the dead, and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, “in Christ shall all be made alive.” His crucified and resurrected body stands before the Mary’s in our text, and it comes to you today in the Lamb’s High Feast at which we sing the praises of our victorious King! He is alive, and so you to are alive in Christ as one who has been baptized into His death and resurrection.

You who once were alive to sin, are now alive in Christ. You are dead to sin as one who has been claimed as God’s own dear son. By His death and resurrection, you are no longer alive to sin, meaning, by HIS work you have been set free. And that is the great joy of this Easter morning. Despite the fact that sin is still a part of your life, it is no longer your master because Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil by bursting forth from the tomb in joyous victory. Sin and temptation will not cease for you. They will not fade off into the sunset like a victorious hero does in an old western. You will still have to battle them on a daily basis throughout your life. You will still find yourself doubting and questioning your belief in something so outlandish as a man coming back from the dead. And if He were only a man, that may be something worth considering.

But He is not merely a man. He is the Godman, Jesus Christ, and the very Son of the living God. Your sinful flesh wants nothing to do with Him, and wants you to turn away from the truth that He is God in the flesh. His resurrection from the grave put your sinful flesh in subjection to Him, because the goal it shares with Satan to bring you into eternal death has been utterly destroyed. So, it scratches and claws at you, trying with all its might to make you abandon the truth that Christ is risen. Because without a risen Savior, you have no hope and sin still has power over you. Yet, you keep on sinning because you bear the sinful flesh. You cannot escape your nature that is a part of you by virtue of your descension from Adam. That Old Adam that dwells in you is your enemy, and he is cunning. He seeks to corrupt your faith at every turn, and make you rely on

yourself instead of Jesus for the answers to your sin problem. He wants you to believe that it is within your power to overcome it yourself.

So, that old man points you to things like self-help gurus, books, and “miracle workers,” for the answer to the problems in your life. But those problems are caused by sin. The one making you look for answers everywhere but in Christ is the source of all those problems, and so the answer cannot be found anywhere but in faith. It can only be found in the water of your baptism where that old man is drowned and the new man rises. There is the resurrection which brings life to you now by faith and gives you the hope you need to look forward to the resurrection to come. You have been baptized into His death, His burial, and His resurrection. By faith you have passed through the Passion of Christ and been made righteous by His blood. The Christian life is all about that truth, which is why you live a life according to that gift which the Holy Spirit brings to you.

Jesus didn't defeat sin, death, and Satan so that you could keep on sinning. He didn't rise from the grave so that you have a golden parachute that gives you a way out no matter what you do. He defeated sin, death, and the devil so that you would be righteous in the sight of your Father—so that your sins would not condemn you to eternal death. Because He knows you have no ability of your own to overcome that verdict. As those who are in the faith, the response to God's gracious gift is not to continue sinning so that His grace will abound all the more (Rom. 6:1). You respond in faith, the Holy Spirit working in and through you to live the sanctified life to which you have been called. This fruit of faith is not what makes you righteous, but righteous living flows from the gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation which flows from the Lord Jesus who has died and risen for your eternal benefit.

As those who are loved by God for the sake of His Son, you don't just thumb your nose at His gift and continue on in sin. Living in sin leads to a loss of faith, and that leads to the opposite of why Christ went to His death. It leads to eternal death. But Christ has conquered death, and He has done that for you. By His death He has destroyed death and the devil (Heb. 2:14), and because of that blessed truth you do not have to fear the condemnation of eternal death that sin would otherwise bring upon you. Satan wields the power of death as His weapon against the people of God, seeking to use it to make you doubt the efficacy of His death, and thus His resurrection. Christ died and rose from the dead so that the evil one would have no power over you. Death could not hold Him, and so it cannot hold you.

He was in the tomb for three days, but not because death defeated Him for a short time, and then He had to battle it and overcome it in some epic struggle. Death would not

have been able to hold Him for a single millisecond if the Son of God had not allowed it. But He knew it was necessary for Him to pay the full price for your redemption. By dying the death that you deserve, He made the necessary sacrifice to make you truly alive. The life you now live, you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you (Gal 2:20). The mystery of His resurrection is no mystery for you. In faith, you look at your risen Savior and know that He lives because He is God of very God, and because He has emerged victorious from the grave, you have the promise that you, too, will emerge victorious from the grave.

Everyone who dies in the faith of the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, has that hope and promise. All those who have gone into glory before you wait with a longing we cannot comprehend for the day of their resurrection. In Revelation 6, the saints under the altar declare, “How long, O Lord?” But they do not look with a longing that is painful or full of sadness. They dwell in the presence of the risen Savior, and He gives them comfort and peace as they await that day of their full glorification. Revelation 6:11 says, “Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete.” The work of bring all of the elect to faith in Christ has not yet been completed. The Gospel call is still being issued to the world so that all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

All those who have passed on in the faith are not truly gone. They dwell in the body of Christ, a body of which each and every one of you are a part. You share the same longing for Christ to inaugurate His eternal kingdom. You sing the same song of praise to the Lamb who was slain and has begun His reign. And you partake of the same feast of His body and blood which they eat now in a way we cannot fully comprehend, but our foretaste of that feast is a glorious reminder of our unity with them in communion with one another. They are alive in Christ in the fullness of His glory, and we are alive in Christ as His glory is revealed to us in the forgiveness of sins He comes to bring us in His holy meal. This is the feast of victory for our God, Alleluia!

You are alive in His grace here in this life, and He assures you of His mercy and love in His provision for you here. The Lord provides forgiveness, life, and salvation in the Holy Supper of His body and blood, and in the words He proclaimed to you earlier that you are forgiven for all of your sins. Jesus said to Martha at the resurrection of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He proclaims the same to you here. He is the One who has resurrected your soul from death, a resurrection that is yours already by faith. And He will be the resurrection of your body when He comes again in glory to call the dead from the grave and give eternal rest to His people. Then, your faith and hope

will be fulfilled in His coming as you rise to join the entire communion of saints in everlasting worship at the throne of the one true God.

By the blood of your Savior, you have been redeemed from the scourge of sin and death. The price of your redemption has been paid in blood and the covenant of salvation sealed in His blood. On this joyous day, the celebration of the risen Savior calls all to know that His promises never fail, and that eternal rest in His holy presence is yours not just in some mythical manner. Eternal rest in His presence is yours bodily, for you will rise on the last day along with all the saints that have entered His glory, forever to dwell side-by-side with Jesus, your brother. You will enjoy eternal companionship with Him, and with all the ones whom you love that have gone before. Resurrection and life await in the eschaton, and because of His grace alone you are alive in Christ until that day, and you will be called home to be alive in Him in everlasting paradise. Amen.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!