



April 2022

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! The familiar Easter greeting speaks to the joy of Christ's resurrection and the great comfort we receive by the witness that He is God, that His teaching is true and the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world so that all who believe in Christ will rise to eternal life! By

the death of Jesus on the cross, He covers the punishment of our sin as Paul clearly states in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, **"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."** In the death of Jesus, God's wrath and anger against the sin of all people was overcome as **"God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation"** **2 Corinthians 5:19**. Through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, Jesus destroys the power of sin to overpower us, as Christ, **"Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed"** **1 Peter 2:24**. Therefore, Jesus puts death to death by His own death and resurrection as **2 Timothy 1:10** attests **"Christ Jesus...abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."**

Having been reminded of everything Christ does for us through the many passages of Scripture reveals God's great love for us in Christ, it is no wonder that the most important event in the life of Christ, His death and resurrection, was the major celebration for the church in the early years after Christ's Ascension. Now also, the high point of the church year is The Resurrection of Our Lord! Yes, Christmas is a major high point of the church year as well; God's promise of a Savior is accomplished by His birth from the virgin. But without the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christmas is devoid of all meaning. One cannot stand without the other. Jesus came **"to seek and save the lost,"** as we read in **St. Luke 19:10**.

We are reminded on Ash Wednesday of our sinful condition and from where we have come and to where we are going upon our death. **"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return"** **Genesis 3:19**. Those words are harsh because sin had entered the world and its consequences were established forever. While those words are difficult to hear, both for our first parents and we ourselves, be reminded also, the last time you heard those words on Ash Wednesday, the ashes were marked on your forehead in the form of a cross. The reality of sin is given to us by the ashes marked on our foreheads but the cross is the great reminder that Christ lifts us from our sinful condition by bearing our death on Himself. In dying on the cross, Jesus completely destroys death's power over us. Jesus removes the stranglehold death has over us while also demonstrating that one day He too will raise our bodies and reuniting both soul and body will glorify us giving us the blessings of eternity that He earns by His death and resurrection.

The Resurrection of Our Lord, or Easter Day as we so often refer to it, is the high point of the church year indeed. However, there is more than one day in the season of Easter for the church year. In fact, the season of Easter is a 50 day celebration for the members of Christ's church on earth which continues to the Day of Pentecost. Easter was, therefore, not just a one day celebration but the very heart of the church year and still is today. Even more, we celebrate Easter every Sunday throughout the church year because salvation is won by the death and the resurrection of Christ.

Our Savior's love knows no limits and the mercies of The Lord are new to us every morning. God's grace is showered upon us abundantly throughout the church year as Word and Sacrament continually nourish us with strength for our souls and forgiveness of our sin. With the rest of Christianity, we celebrate our Lord's victorious resurrection, His triumph over death and praise Him for giving us the blessings of His cross and of His empty tomb.

Now with the sacred writer we fear no death and can joyfully say! **"Death is swallowed up in victory."** **"O death where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"** **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."** **1 Corinthians 15:54b-57**

The Prayer for Easter Day expresses our thanks to God that we will one day be raised from the dead as Our Lord was that triumphant day.

Almighty God, the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

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In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt