

## The Fact And The Meaning Of Christ's Resurrection.

Text: Mark 16:1-8

1) The Indisputable Fact

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Glorious Meaning

88, 92, 91, 95, 99

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 16:1-8, *<sup>1</sup> Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.*

*<sup>2</sup> Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. <sup>3</sup> And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large.*

*<sup>5</sup> And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.*

*<sup>7</sup> But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." <sup>8</sup> So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

He is risen, He is risen!  
Tell it with a joyful voice;  
He has burst His three days' prison.  
Let the whole wide world rejoice.  
Death is conquered, man is free,  
Christ has won the victory.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, “<sup>22</sup> *The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.* <sup>23</sup> *This was the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.* <sup>24</sup> *This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.*”<sup>2</sup>

In this way David rejoiced in the Old Testament when in the spirit, by divine inspiration, he saw the glorious day in which the Lord’s Anointed, whom the Lord would not allow to see corruption, would leave the tomb.

But we live in the time of the New Testament. What David saw in the dim future has been fulfilled. Christ is risen from the dead. He rose almost two thousand years ago. What thrills of joy should fill our hearts as we meditate on this glorious event!

Is there any other day in the history of this world that has brought greater blessings for all generations, past, present, and future? Is there any other day that has brought greater deliverance for our fallen race? Is there any other day that has witnessed a greater miracle than the day of Christ’s resurrection?

Must we not exclaim with David, “<sup>23</sup> *This was the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.* <sup>24</sup> *This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it*”?

No greater miracle can be performed than to raise the dead. How astounded we would be if some one would take us to the cemetery and before our eyes would call forth and restore to life the decaying body of a friend who sleeps beneath the soil. This was done. Christ of His own power, and the prophets and the apostles in the power of God, did raise the dead.<sup>3</sup> But what are these examples of people restored to life compared with Christ’s own resurrection?

Christ was not passive in His resurrection. He was not merely *raised* from the dead by the glory of the Father, He was active in His resurrection. He Himself of His own power *rose* from the dead. Though death had claimed Him and bound Him with his fetters and chains, though He was truly and perfectly dead, His heart ceasing to beat and not a spark of life remaining in His chilled and motionless body, He raised Himself. He freed Himself from death’s cold embrace. He restored Himself to life. Can there be a greater miracle?

But is Christ’s resurrection beyond doubt? Is our joy on Easter day well founded? May not all these things be a dream? No, my friends, these things are

not a dream. If ever we Christians can lift up our heads in triumph, and defy all unbelievers, and rejoice in the faith, it is on the day of Christ's resurrection.

Let us consider with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Fact And The Meaning Of Christ's Resurrection*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Indisputable Fact**

To be convinced of the fact of Christ's resurrection all doubts as to His actual death must be removed. The theory has been advanced by the opponents of Christianity, that Christ could not have been actually dead, that He must have been in a trance, and that the coolness of the grave must have restored Him to consciousness. How absurd and utterly impossible is this theory!

What does our Gospel say? <sup>1</sup> *Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.*

<sup>2</sup> *Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.* <sup>3</sup> *And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"*

Would these women have come to the sepulchre on Easter morning to anoint the body of Christ, to embalm His body, if the least doubt could have been entertained as to His actual death? if the slightest possibility had existed that He might be in a trance? O how anxious they would have been to think that He was merely in a death-like sleep!

But they knew that Jesus was truly dead. They had seen Him bow His head on the cross and give up His spirit. They had seen with their own eyes how the soldier had thrust a spear into His side, to make sure of His death.

The fact of Christ's resurrection is evinced by the empty tomb. We read, <sup>4</sup> *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away — for it was very large.* On Friday evening, when Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, these women were present at the interment. They saw how their beloved Master was wrapped in a clean linen cloth with spices. They saw how the corpse was deposited in the new rock-hewn grave. They saw how a great stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

And what do they see now on Easter morning? The stone is rolled away. The black, yawning opening of the sepulchre stares upon them. Its occupant is gone. How is this to be accounted for? Was the body stolen?

The murderers of Christ had made theft impossible. They came to Pilate and said, *“Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’<sup>64</sup> Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.”*

*<sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.”<sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.<sup>4</sup>*

The guard consisted of several soldiers at the sepulchre and had them seal the stone with the imperial Roman signet. How could the body be stolen in the face of such precautions? And yet the body was no longer there on Easter morning. The imperial signet was broken. The stone was rolled away. The watch had fled. The tomb was vacant.

And it was an angel from heaven that announced the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. We read, *<sup>5</sup> And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.<sup>6</sup> But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.*

Can we, dare we doubt a fact which God makes known to us by one of His own messengers? Must not Christ’s resurrection be an indisputable fact when we hear God informing us that He is risen from the dead?

And how was this resurrection accomplished? We read in Matthew 28:2–4, *<sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.<sup>3</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.<sup>4</sup> And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.*

This angel did not assist Christ in His resurrection. Christ had risen already and had passed with the body of His glorious resurrection through the sealed

stone. The angel's mission was merely to reveal the fact of His resurrection and to show by the vacant sepulchre that death no longer holds the Prince of Life.

Who can dispute the fact of Christ's resurrection? Did Jesus not walk upon this earth for forty days after His resurrection, and show Himself to His disciples at different times and in various places, and eat and drink with them, and hold long conversations with them, and instruct them, until He farewelled them and ascended into heaven before their eyes?

A favourite theory with the enemies of Christianity is, that the disciples were deceived, that the Christ of the resurrection was a Christ of their own imagination. Is not this theory as absurd as it can be? Did not the risen Lord have the greatest trouble to convince His disciples of the fact of His resurrection? What trouble did He have with Thomas! How slow of heart were they all to believe!

Another theory is, that the entire account of Christ's wonderful accomplishments, including His resurrection, is a piece of fraud, a made-up story playing upon the credulity of the common people. Is not this theory as absurd as the rest?

Did the disciples of Christ, and the writers of the New Testament in general, ever show the slightest signs of wilful or involuntary deception? Were they not the most competent and truthful witnesses, who knew what they said, and meant what they said?

And, finally, what did the disciples get for preaching the crucified and risen Christ? Were they not persecuted and put to death for their testimony? Can we conceive how a whole class of men will go into poverty, disgrace, persecution, and death for the sake of a flagrant, wilful lie, rather than to tell the truth and thereby to avoid hardships and disgrace, and to live?

No; Christ's resurrection is a fact which has been sealed with the heart's blood of the most trustworthy witnesses, a fact which is even better established than most of the universally credited events in the pages of history, a fact which every person in this world, using his own common sense and not blinded by prejudice, will and must admit. The resurrection of Christ is an indisputable fact.

## **2. The Glorious Meaning.**

A glorious meaning is connected with this indisputable fact. This is the second part of our meditation.

The angel said to the women, *<sup>7</sup> But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.*”

“*As He said to you.*” The angel refers to Christ’s words and tells the women that now, after His resurrection, Jesus would make true all that He had said. And this is the meaning which, above all, is implied in Christ’s resurrection: Christ’s Word is true, God’s Word is true.

Christ’s resurrection is the crowning evidence of our Christian faith. Christ’s resurrection puts the stamp of genuineness on every word that is contained in the Bible. Even one of the bitterest enemies of Christianity that ever lived<sup>5</sup> and who has, perhaps, done more harm than all the rest, calls the resurrection of Christ “*the centre of the centre — the real heart of Christianity,*” and adds, “*It can scarcely be doubted that with it [the resurrection] the truth of Christianity stands or falls.*”

With singular unanimity, the enemies of the Christian religion have agreed that, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave be granted, all else that Christianity claims must be conceded. How triumphantly, then, we can profess the faith!

We can say to the unbeliever, Christ is risen from the dead; you cannot contradict this fact; you yourself must and do admit it by your inability to disprove it. What, then, do your arguments amount to which you bring forth against the Christian religion? They amount to nothing, however cleverly they are made. They are as shining soap bubbles.

And do you not see, the living monument which the risen Christ has erected in the world, that great monument which stands to this day and will stand to the end of the world? Do you not see the Christian Church, which is built on the fact of Christ’s resurrection and in which He invisibly lives and reigns?

The meaning of Christ’s resurrection, however, is not only to furnish us with an invincible proof for the truth of the Christian religion, but also to make us joyful in the faith and in the hope of eternal life.

Three things that are contained in the third article of the Creed have been made sure by Christ's resurrection: the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

We must remember that Christ is our Substitute in everything He did, that for us He lived and led a life in strict obedience to the divine Law, that for us He died on the cross and suffered the punishment which we deserve for our transgressions, that for us He was laid in the grave and entered into the dark chambers of death.

And as Jesus was our Substitute in life and death so He was our Representative in His glorious resurrection. God raised His beloved Son from the dead and thereby solemnly declared that His great work for us is approved, that the Law is fulfilled for all people, that the penalty is paid for the sins of the world. This is the glorious meaning of Christ's resurrection!

It means that our blessed Mediator and Redeemer has not only finished the redemption, but that His great work for us has also been accepted by the Father.

It means that the divine subscription and seal has been affixed to the document which attests to us the remission of all our guilt.

It means that God's wrath and anger upon our sins is appeased, that His stern justice is satisfied, and that He is perfectly reconciled to the whole fallen world.

It means that not only a universal pardon has been extended to all sinners from the beginning to the end of the world, but that even a solemn public absolution has been pronounced upon all the children of men, declaring them free from guilt and exempt from the damnation which for their sins they deserve.

Paul distinctly says that Christ *"was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification,"*<sup>6</sup> and *"that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them."*<sup>7</sup> This is the glorious meaning of Christ's resurrection!

Come, whoever you are, here is the forgiveness of all your sins. God has sealed it to you in Christ's resurrection. Take it, receive it, accept it, believe it, and you have it.

And as Christ rose from the dead, so we await the resurrection of the body. We must all sink into our graves when our time has come. But if with the

forgiveness of our sins we depart from this life, death shall harm us as little as it has harmed Christ.

He says, ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”<sup>8</sup>*** For the body death shall be for us nothing more than a sweet slumber. ***“<sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”<sup>9</sup>*** Christ rose from the dead, and we shall follow Him. He became the first fruits of those who sleep.

A glorious day it will be when our bodies shall come forth from the earth and be like the glorious body of the risen Christ, bodies that shall be freed from all infirmities, bodies that shall be spirit-like, as Christ’s body was when after His resurrection He passed through the thickest walls and appeared and again vanished from sight! It will be a glorious day when in our flesh we shall see God !

Finally, Christ’s resurrection means for us life everlasting. We read in Romans 6:8–9, ***<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.*** What a glorious life into which Christ entered by His resurrection!

No enemy of His was permitted to see and abuse Him. No sorrow filled His heart. Not a tear did He shed. But He ascended into heaven, He was received into the beautiful realms above amid the hallelujahs of the heavenly host, seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and lives and reigns to all eternity.

Thus we shall also enter into heaven, into life everlasting, into joy and bliss which no language can tell; for the Psalmist says, ***“In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore,”<sup>10</sup>*** and our dear Redeemer Himself has given us the blessed promise in John 10:27–28, ***<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life.***

Praise, then, and glory be to our risen Lord, to our heavenly King, who lives in us and we in Him, and who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Amen.



The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn 95

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 118:22–24

<sup>3</sup> The Widow Of Zarephath's Son (1 Kings 17:17–24), The Shunammite Woman's Son (2 Kings 4:18–37), The Man Raised Out Of Elisha's Grave (2 Kings 13:20–21), The Widow Of Nain's Son (Luke 7:11–17), Jairus' Daughter (Luke 8:40–56), Lazarus Of Bethany (John 11:1–45), Various Saints In Jerusalem (Matthew 27:50–53), Tabitha (Acts 9:36–43), Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12)

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 27:63–66

<sup>5</sup> D. F. Strauss

<sup>6</sup> Romans 4:25

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

<sup>8</sup> John 11:25–26

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:53

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 16:11