

## The Greatest Truth Of History.

Text: Mark 16:6

Suggested Hymns:  
88, 102, 91, 103, 95

- 1) Because It Is The Record Of Divine Truth
- 2) Because In Order To Rise Again From The Dead,  
Jesus Had To Die
- 3) Because It Assures Us Of Our Own Resurrection  
And Brings Enduring Comfort To The Believer

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 16:6, ***“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.” (NKJV)***

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Easter is a day of joy. It marks the Saviour’s triumphant hour when He arose gloriously to show Himself the undisputed Victor over sin, death, and the grave.

Easter has always been, and will always be, one of the outstanding days, if not the greatest, in all the world’s history.

It is a thrilling experience to greet you this happy morning and to wish everyone the unmatched joy and blessing of our risen Redeemer, as you assemble to celebrate His resurrection.

It is gratifying to realise that millions of people all over the world gather in their places of worship to pay tribute to Christ’s resurrection victory.

May our heavenly Father be pleased to attach His blessing to our worship as we review the Easter narrative according to St. Mark’s Gospel.

It is the greatest truth of history, couched in words so beautiful in their simplicity, yet so picturesque in portrayal, so graphic in honest description, and above all, so divinely factual, that we find ourselves standing in spirit before the open tomb of our Lord and hearing the angelic announcement once given to the trembling, startled, early-morning visitors: ***“He is risen! He is not here!”***

I pray that the resurrected Redeemer will bless us with His Holy Spirit, as we consider *The Greatest Truth of History*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

**1. I Believe That Christ's Easter Victory  
Is The Greatest Single Truth Of History  
Because It Is The Record Of Divine Truth.**

**A Simple Word of Truth**

Perhaps you are asking: "*Why do you believe that Christ's Easter victory is the greatest truth of history?*" We answer without hesitation, because it is the record of divine truth. It is written in language that everyone can understand; a few facts in a few words tell the whole story, and the reader senses that the Gospel writers were honest, sober men of faith who wrote what they knew to be true, that Jesus actually arose from the dead and showed Himself alive to them and to hundreds of others.

Now suppose that Jesus did not rise. What could they have hoped to gain by spreading a story that was not based upon fact? Why would they want to deceive the public of their day? What was their reward for giving an honest account of what they knew to be true?

The answer is that their writing and preaching met with poverty, persecution, heartache, rejection, and death. Do you know why the apostles and the early Christians were persecuted and beaten, stoned and thrown into the lion's den? Not for preaching the teaching of Jesus, or the Virgin Birth. It was not for preaching His coming again, but for preaching the resurrection.

It wasn't necessary for St. Mark to go into rapture in an effort to create reader interest. He merely told the story in a humble, forthright, factual manner, and it struck a responsive chord in every believer's heart because it is true.

The Easter narrative breathes the spirit of honesty, which, because it is true, because it is divinely inspired, touches the heart and mind again and again and creates and strengthens faith.

It presents the evidence of Easter so clearly and simply and truthfully that unnumbered people have come to faith in Jesus Christ, have found Him to be, and acclaimed Him, their only life-giving, comforting Saviour, who said in John 14:19, *Because I live, you will live also.*

It would be wise to spend a few minutes reading the world-changing statements as St. Mark presents them. Here is the account in summary.

### **Mark's Story of Easter<sup>1</sup>**

On that first, never-to-be-forgotten Easter morning, just as the sun began to peep in splendour over the surrounding hills, some loyal, women and friends came with perfume and spices intending to anoint the body of their Lord.

As they strolled along with heavy, grieving hearts, the untimely, merciless death of Jesus was uppermost in their minds. Accordingly their conversation must have been limited. Realising, however, that they came to render a last tender service to their Master and Friend, and knowing, too, that the entrance to the rock-hewn tomb had been closed with a huge stone, they began to wonder just how they would manage to roll it away and be able to enter the Saviour's sepulchre.

While they were asking one another the question, they quite naturally looked up and turned their eyes in the direction of the tomb. To their surprise they observed that the stone had been rolled away. With quickened step they hastened to the rock grave.

Very naturally, too, they went right into it — but they stopped short and probably gasped in amazement and fright, for as they entered they saw that one of God's messengers, clothed in a long, white, sparkling garment, was seated on the right hand side.

It was very evident to the angel that they were trembling with fear and no doubt ready to burst forth in convulsive sobs because Jesus was gone and they could not fully grasp the meaning of the angel's presence.

And so, in tender, comforting words, the angel immediately calmed their frightened minds and troubled hearts by proclaiming the greatest truth of history. It was a message of joy, hope, peace, and truth. 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.***

### **2. I Believe That Christ's Easter Victory**

#### **Is The Greatest Single Truth Of History**

**Because In Order To Rise Again From The Dead, Jesus Had To Die.**

Did Jesus Die? Some may object: “Well and good! The Easter narrative of Mark sounds plausible enough, but how do we know Jesus was there in the first place?” “Was the tomb occupied?” “Did He really die?” Yes, He really died, and He died for the sins of all mankind as the Bible says. *“He was delivered for our offenses,”*<sup>2</sup> but, thank God, we can add joyfully, *“and was raised again for our justification.”*

The fact that Jesus suffered death is also an established, inescapable fact. On the ancient hill of execution, just outside the city wall, under sentence of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, three men died as criminals.

One of the Roman soldiers, a centurion, the captain of the guard, stationed there until all had died, was attracted to the man on the central cross and could not take his eyes off Jesus as He suffered and writhed in nameless agony upon the cross. He heard the seven sacred statements Christ made for all the world to hear and remember. He watched Jesus die.

It was this soldier who came to faith in Christ and testified that He who hung there and died was a righteous man.<sup>3</sup> You ask for proof of His death, consider furthermore, that no human being could have survived the brutal conduct, the inhuman tortures Jesus endured, nor could anyone have long endured the wound that was made in His side by the plunged spear.

What is more, the Sacred Record points out that under normal circumstances the legs of the crucified were broken to hasten their death, but that in the case of Jesus this was not done, because He had been already dead.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, two members of the Jewish supreme court, namely Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus,<sup>5</sup> knew that Jesus was really dead, for they removed His body from the cross and laid it in a new tomb which belonged to one of them and had only recently been hewn out of the rock in a garden near Calvary.

That tomb was occupied . The next day a Roman officer came with the governor’s seal and affixed it to the boulder that closed the doorway. In this way the power of the Roman Empire guaranteed that Jesus who lay in that tomb was dead and that as far as they were was concerned He must stay in that tomb. Joseph’s tomb joined that sombre multitude of graves in all ages in which, without exception, the dead are found.

### **The Difference**

So Jesus died and was buried. But unlike all other burial places where the dead lie sleeping, Jesus broke the bonds of His grave and came forth. No one else who was laid to rest has broken the bonds of death, nor will he arise until God gives the signal on the great day of resurrection, when Jesus will come again, make an end of all earthly activity, and be the Judge of all mankind.

Whether we go to Westminster Abbey, where England has buried those she delighted to honour — her kings, queens, warriors, statesmen, missionaries, poets, painters, singers; whether we stand before the Great Pyramid of Egypt, built over 2,000 years ago, where Pharaoh lies in mummied quiet; whether we go to see the Taj Mahal of India, where the Mongol emperors' lonely bones are still lying; whether we travel the trackless roadways of the Seven Seas, where the dead of many ages are hidden in the deep, or visit the marble monuments that have been erected in many a cemetery, we know they all have one thing in common — none of these have come forth from their last resting place, no matter how or where they were buried.

Not so Christ. When on Sunday morning the first faint streaks of light streamed into Joseph's lovely garden, troubled, weeping women found an open tomb, and a white messenger, with a word never spoken in any other of mankind's innumerable tombs, proclaimed the greatest truth of history: ***“He is risen! He is not here!”***

And the world pauses today to honour Jesus Christ who conquered death and decay and brought joy, hope, and comfort to all who believe in Him, who died and rose again for their salvation.

**3. I Believe That Christ's Easter Victory  
Is The Greatest Single Truth Of History  
Because It Assures Us Of Our Own Resurrection And Brings Enduring  
Comfort To The Believer.**

It has been, and continues to be, the imperishable faith of the church throughout the Christian era that our Lord, having risen as the First Fruits from the dead, as St. Paul speaks of Him, entered as our pattern and forerunner into mansions of greater glory prepared for Him and likewise for all believers.

***Because I live, you will live also,*** Jesus said. First fruits premise a complete harvest to follow. We who believe in Christ and His resurrection radiance and

reality are the harvest. We, who shall someday occupy our narrow resting places, we the then dead, shall awaken, and we shall rise in glory like Christ's glorious resurrection!

Someday over every tomb, over the flashing waves of the world's waters, the resurrection angel shall stand again, and he shall say to everyone of us in the same words that he once used: ***"He is not here!"***

The places that have known the dead shall know them no more. All shall rise, and what a great sight that will be when from mountaintop and deep ravine, or the valley of the silent, or from the bottom of the ocean, all who have died shall rise!

But the joy of the believer is this, that he shall rise to life everlasting. More convincing than any miracle of nature is the miracle of Easter. If God brought Jesus Christ alive and presented Him to those who loved Him, will He not also, in love, bring you forth someday, in His own time, and present you to Himself and then — may God grant this! — give to you and to all who accept Him in humble, trusting faith, the glories of eternal life?!

### **No Resurrection —What Then?**

If Christ had not risen, you and I would still be in our sins and on the road to hell with never a chance of salvation. Let it be emphasised that the crucial point in Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If the Lord is still in the grave, then there's no hope for any one of us. Then, when we die, everything is ended. Then the Bible is false, and we might just as well throw it away. But — and may God be forever praised for this! — Jesus Christ has risen! The Bible says so, and history proves it.

### **Spiritual Blessings**

Now, in what way is Christ's resurrection a source of enduring comfort to the believer? In a spiritual sense Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and to save the lost and to redeem them that were under the curse of the Law because of their transgressions.

But now think for just a moment on the stupendous fact that Easter brings. Jesus lives! He is risen! The grave has not been able to hold Him! Doesn't that fact confirm faith in God's goodness and mercy? Doesn't it tell us that Jesus

spoke the truth? Doesn't it assure each trembling, repentant heart, that forgiveness is not only a promise, but also a glorious and an available reality?

The resurrection doctrine confirms faith in the believer's heart by lifting the veil that separates this world from the next and by telling him ever so tenderly and convincingly that the love of the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven him and that it goes with him every day, all the way. Jesus Christ, having risen from the dead, and having become a partaker of life eternal, lives and reigns to all eternity.

### **Physical Blessings**

In a physical sense His Easter victory assures us that He still loves us as much as He loved His first disciples. He can still be touched by the hands of any modern doubting Thomas, and He can still hear the anxious cries that come to Him in the dead of night asking only and simply, "Why, Lord?"

In line with this thought our Lord's resurrection comforts us in the knowledge that there is power for a victorious life. The Bible tells us that the same power, the same energy, that was used to raise Christ from the dead is the power that He gives me to live victoriously every day. And this same promise is extended to everyone who believes.

Let us find great comfort in the resurrection victory, for it is the greatest truth of history. We do not need to live each day from defeat to defeat and walk and work with furrowed brow and sorrow-filled countenance. We don't have to go around with a long face, but we can walk with our heads high, with a smile on our faces, with a gleam in our eyes and a spring in our steps because we know that we have been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ and adopted into the family of God, and we know that we are His own.

We are members of the royal family of heaven by adoption into God's family. The same power that raised Christ from the dead, gives us power to have a daily victory over sin.

The people who have peace in their lives are the people who know Jesus Christ. The only people who are truly happy in the world are the people who know that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead and that He *lives eternally to save*.<sup>6</sup> The only people who have peace, joy, and rest and who are undisturbed

by the events in the world are those who have come to Christ and who have accepted Him in trusting faith!

### Conclusion

Because the record of Christ's Easter victory is divinely inspired and written in simple language by men at the dictation of the Holy Spirit — men who were honest, conservative in their judgement, men who wrote what they knew and believed, men who wanted to bring hope to all who heard this good news, and men who suffered the tortures of death because of their own firm faith in the resurrection reality, we believe it to be the greatest truth of history.

Furthermore, we believe it because we are convinced that Jesus was truly dead according to the evidence submitted. We believe that He died to redeem us and all people from sin, and that we have in Christ a most gracious Saviour. We believe, too, that He was the only occupant of any grave who rose.

Again, we believe this truth of Easter because it assures us and all believers of the resurrection unto glory and brings us and them enduring comfort amid a turbulent life, because we know that someday these earthly trials will pass away and we shall forever be with the Lord in glory.

So, then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest truth of history. Do you believe this? Are you sure that you will rise again? That you will be saved? If you do not yet believe in the resurrected Redeemer, come to Him today. Hear the angel's statement proclaiming the greatest truth of history: ***"He is risen! He is not here!"*** Believe this with all your heart, and someday in God's own time you shall rise in glory to be forever with the Lord. 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> Mark 16:1-8

<sup>2</sup> Romans 4:25

<sup>3</sup> Luke 23:47

<sup>4</sup> John 19:31-33

<sup>5</sup> John 19:38-39

<sup>6</sup> Hymn 103