

The Resurrection of Our Lord
Mark 16:1-8

He is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Now I cannot prove to you that Jesus is risen from the dead. At the same time, I cannot prove to you that Jesus is still dead. Interestingly, many people have tried to prove that Jesus didn't rise from the dead and haven't been successful. The resurrection of our Lord is an article of faith. The Holy Spirit convinces you through the eyewitness testimony recorded in Scriptures that the account of our Lord's resurrection is true. But just because it is an article of faith doesn't mean that there's no compelling evidence that Jesus is, in fact, risen from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection is a historical event. In fact, our faith hinges on the fact that Jesus "was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man." And that He "was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate." And that "He rose again according" to the eyewitness accounts of "the Scriptures." If these things didn't happen, then we have no reason to be a Christian. Paul says,

"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

This is unlike any other religion in the world. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam do not depend on history, but a list of wise sayings handed down by so-called enlightened people. To be sure, the Bible has a lot of wisdom, but it depends solely on the person Jesus Christ. The Bible is mostly narrative. Narrative is the fancy word for true stories. The narrative of the Bible is the account of God's interaction with His fallen creation. God was not content to create and then ignore His creation. He has been and He is personally involved with His world since the beginning.

You might object in your mind, saying, “well, if God is personally involved with things going on, why hasn’t God done something about the evil in His world.”

First, let’s assume God hasn’t done anything about evil. Let’s say you’re a woodworker and you go into your workshop to create something. Let’s say whatever you’re trying to do just isn’t working. What would happen to the wood that is useless? It’d probably go into the scrap heap to be burned.

I suppose God could’ve chosen to do something similar. He could’ve looked at Adam and Eve who had rebelled and thrown them into the scrap heap along with the creation they warped and started over again. I’m personally happy that God didn’t choose to go that way. I mean, I like being alive. I’m thankful for the time I’ve had on this earth. Thankfully, God’s ways are not man’s way.

Instead of throwing us on the scrap heap destined for the fire, He decided to rescue us from our predicament. A predicament that we created for ourselves. But that puts God into a predicament. How can God be just and merciful at the same time?

You can understand this predicament. If you or a close family member or friend is violated, you want justice to be served for the perpetrator, right? You surely wouldn’t be happy if the offender got away with his crime, would you? Your problem is that you’re both perpetrator and victim! That creates quite a dilemma on how to have pure justice. Justice demands that you be thrown onto the scrap heap for burning.

But you are a creation of God. God cares about you and especially when you have been violated because of sin. How is He to show compassion for you and maintain His perfect justice?

He solves this by joining Himself to His creation and becoming the chief victim of sin.

God's righteous wrath against sin is poured out upon Jesus on the cross. Jesus, who is God Himself, is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) God's perfect justice is perfected on the cross so that His mercy may flow unabated from the cross to all men and women. The resurrection of Jesus shows us that His sacrifice on the cross was acceptable to God the Father and that it did indeed pay for all sin and God's mercy is available to us!

If Jesus isn't resurrected from the dead, then our sin is not paid for and we can expect no mercy from God. (1 Corinthians 15:13-19) But Jesus is risen from the dead! This is the greatest event of history.

Consider these facts.

Jesus claimed to be God. This was the very reason the Jewish religious leaders condemned Him to death. They had no illusions about who Jesus claimed that He was.

Jesus died. Roman centurions were masters at their job. They were experts on capital punishment, especially crucifixions. To claim that Jesus didn't truly die on the cross would be like accusing a master baker that he doesn't know how to make a simple loaf of bread!

Jesus rose from the dead. Over 500 people saw Jesus alive again including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, the remaining eleven apostles, and many others. Paul wrote in the 50's and 60's about 17 to 27 years after the resurrection and many witnesses were still alive!

The Jewish leaders could've disproved Christianity. Unlike reporters today, the Jewish leaders were in the perfect position to disprove the resurrection and they couldn't.

Men don't typically die for a lie. All the remaining apostles died gruesome deaths because of their faith.

They preaching that Christ is risen from the dead and that He is the only way to salvation. St. John was the only exception. He was exiled and died of old age. It certainly wasn't about making money or becoming rich off of believers. Quite the opposite. Most of the early believers were quite poor.

The New Testament writings are the most well attested to documents from ancient history. They are a reliable account of Jesus' actions and words. They were written within a generation of His resurrection. They were copied and spread to the known world at that time. The amazing number of copies we have spread over five separate geographical locations tell us that what we have in the New Testament is reliable.

Jesus is risen!
He is risen indeed, alleluia.

And that is the greatest news that you can receive!

Jesus risen from the dead means that God has solved the problem of evil. Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil, which are the sources of evil, on the cross. He distributes that victory to those who believe the report of His life, death, and resurrection and that Jesus' victory is their victory through faith.

Not one of us deserve this gift of salvation. This gift cannot be bought or earned. You're not born into this gift. Quite the contrary as you are born inheriting Adam's earned gift of sin and condemnation. Sadly, this is proved time and time again by the fact that we live in a world filled with evil and suffering.

You must be born again in the water and the Word. God must wash you clean from your sin and empower you to live a new life. A life filled with love and mercy. And because you live in a sin filled world with your old sinful nature still plaguing you, you must continue in God's grace with the means that He mandated: preaching, absolution, and the Lord's Supper.

God gives you His Holy Spirit in your baptism who works through the audible Word of the Scripture and the visible Word of His Supper to keep you in the Faith once handed down by the apostles.

God established His Church to proclaim the victory found in the resurrection of Jesus and administer the means of grace so that Jesus' victory becomes your victory. Through the church, you are brought into God's Kingdom through Baptism and fed through preaching, absolution, and the Lord's supper so that you remain in His kingdom.

It's not enough to go to church once or twice a year. The gift of salvation through faith found in the church is not on the periphery of your life but is the center of your life. The Christian faith is not merely wise sayings that help you navigate your way through life but is Jesus Himself who must continue to come to you in Word and Sacrament. These are the means that God established for His Holy Spirit to work a living faith in you.

A living faith means that you believe that the work of Jesus on your behalf is for you.

It's not enough to believe the history of what happened. Even the demons believe that. (James 2:19)

It's not enough to believe that the work of Jesus pays for the sins of the entire world. A casual reading of Jesus' simple words is enough to know that.

You must believe that Jesus' atoning work on the cross vindicated in His resurrection that covers sin is for you. Personally.

Jesus is historical. He lived. He died. He rose again.

Jesus made promises to you. He promises to come again in glory and to put an end to suffering forever. Jesus promises to give you forgiveness of sins in baptism and absolution. He promises to give you Himself in preaching and in His Supper. He promises you salvation and eternal life.

The most important question for you is the question that Jesus asked His apostles, “who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

He is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.