

## SERMON NOTES - Easter Sunday 2023 - Raised With Christ

These notes are designed to be read along with the associated audio / video message

This Easter Sunday we remember and celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection.

Just to be absolutely clear, Christians believe in a real person called Jesus who lived and died around 2,000 years ago in Israel, and who, although He was a poor and uneducated "nobody", is the most influential figure in all of human history.

We believe that after He died, as a criminal on a Roman cross, He rose again to life and lives forevermore, proving that He is who He claimed to be; God come in human flesh.

These are bold claims, but they are the essence of the Christian faith. God in Jesus became a human being so that He could live as one of us, defeat the devil's schemes to enslave people, and die on our behalf so that people can accept His sacrifice and be forgiven of their sins and live with God forever.

This is the simple summary of our faith, and at Easter we remember and rejoice in His death and resurrection for these reasons.

I would like to read a passage that Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus, which is relevant to us today:

**Eph 1:16-23** NKJV — "16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding [hearts] being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

He starts by telling them that he is praying for them - praying that they may be able to see and understand some vitally important truths. He prays that they may have spiritual, or God-given, wisdom and revelation: that their minds may be opened by God to perceive something that is not normally obvious. He prays that the "eyes of their understanding", or "hearts", may be opened to be able to see something that their physical eyes are not able to see. What does he want them to see? Do we see it?

18 ... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

This is talking about Heavenly things...

19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

There is something very great and powerful that God has done for us and we access it by believing - by seeing with these "spiritual" or "heart" eyes. And now the crux of it - he gives us a way to "see" or understand it - he compares what God has done for us and in us to what happened to Jesus when He died and was raised again:

...according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Describe this process from death to life and ascension and coronation.

He says that this is a picture for us of this "exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" and "the working of His mighty power" for us and in us. Have you understood this?

To summarise: Paul prays for our real, spiritual eyes to be "opened" and "enlightened" so that we can see and understand what God has done for us and in us, and he says that if we compare ourselves to Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension it will help us to understand this.

Let's read on in the Ephesians passage to see what Paul says next:

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Wow - what authority, and power and victory. Jesus overcame all of these enemies. It is done and finished. Reading on...

*22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

It is done, but it "for us" - the Church. We are to extend and enforce this victory, to the ends of the Earth. We are to be His "people who are volunteers In the day of His power" His "troops who are willing on His day of battle". We are to "extend His mighty scepter from Zion, and, "Rule in the midst of His enemies!"

The next section of Ephesians goes on to reinforce that what has happened to Jesus has also happened to US who believe: He has explained the power needed to raise Jesus from death to being seated in Heaven with God, and next he says;

**Eph 2:1-6** — *"1 And **you** He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ... 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"*

This is amazing. Lord give us eyes to see these truths.

I want to close today by speaking of the FIRST element of this process - the beginning of the process by which we must identify with Jesus - His death.

We must "die with Him"

**Luk 9:23-24** NKJV - *"23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."*

**Jhn 12:24-25** NKJV — *"24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

**2Ti 2:11** NKJV — *"11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him."*

We must "die with Him" for the life and power and resurrection to take effect on our lives. To the extent that we "die" we live. If we want the blessings and benefits of Jesus' new resurrection life, but we also want to keep hold of our old lives and our control over ourselves, then we will not experience what God wants for us, and what Jesus has done for us.

Romans 6 makes this even clearer:

**Rom 6:1-14** NKJV — *"1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."*

“Reckoning yourself dead to sin” is the key.

How do we “Reckon ourselves”? What does “Reckon” mean and how do I do it?

“*Count / consider yourselves*” - Truth over symptoms. Use your mind and will and act accordingly. Allow truth to override your feelings or impulses and convince yourself - then act accordingly. “*Logizomai*”

Action steps -

- Educate yourself.
- Repent of wrong thinking.
- Take steps / burn bridges:
- Speak and act accordingly:
- Pick yourself up and never give up even if you fall. Take hold of your NEW identity in Christ - your “old man” has died with Jesus

Your citizenship and identity is already in heaven - now start to live it out.

**Col 3:1-4** (NKJV) *1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

Which mirror will you look in?

**Jas 1:22-25** NKJV - *"22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."*

Reckon yourself already dead to sin - you are a new person. Live this new life in Christ.

Examples of “reckoning yourself” -

- When your Credit score changes after identity theft has been rectified you walk free and happy just because of a piece of paper that says you are now debt free.
- When you get a new qualification & subsequent promotion you feel different just because of a piece of paper that says you have a new position
- When you become a new citizen of a country you accept that new identity and start to live it out even if you still feel like you did in your old country
- When you have heart pain and the doctor says it's only indigestion, you accept his diagnosis and feel better even though your chest still hurts as much as it did when you thought you were dying.

The Old man vs New man:

**Col 3:9, 10** NKJV — *"9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"*

**Eph 4:22-24** NKJV — *"22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."*

**2Co 5:17** NKJV — *"17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

YOU ARE A NEW CREATION

YOU DIED WITH JESUS

LIVE THAT WAY AND RENEW YOUR MIND

# Small group discussion guidelines

Remember that the aim of the small group is to foster discussion and community, rather than for the leader or one individual to preach to everyone.

**1** - Often an **Icebreaker question** is a great way to start discussion. You could ask a question like:

- What were the highs or lows of your week?
- What is your earliest memory?
- If you had to describe yourself as one animal, what would it be and why?
- What is your favourite type of holiday destination?

**2** - Next, **read the passage**. You can ask various people in the group to help by each reading a portion of the passage.

**3** - These are the **main questions** to ask to understand the passage:

- What is the main message of this talk / passage?  
Allow discussion and even diverging from the main topic if it is helpful.
- What did you find particularly helpful or challenging?
- What did you not fully understand?
- What can we do PRACTICALLY in response to this teaching?

**4** - Close by offering **prayer** for each person.

- Ask, "how can we pray for you / each other now?"
- Ask each person to pray or you, as leader, pray for each person's need

**The blessing** and opportunity in Small Groups is the possibility for...

- Each person to contribute and/or ask questions,
- People to pray for each other and to ask for prayer,
- People to learn to use and grow in their gifts,
- Community, friendship and intimacy in relationships.

God Bless you in this very important ministry.