**New Hope Global Sermon Easter 2022**

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**This Changes Everything!**

**Introduction** – The Christian Holy Week is a time when the realities of God and evil and life after death get proclaimed loudly around the world. Although many don’t believe in heaven and hell, they have some fearful consciousness of those realities – as this story proves:

*After being nearly snowbound for two weeks last winter, a Seattle man departed for his vacation to Miami Beach where he was to meet his wife the next day at the conclusion of her business trip. They were looking forward to pleasant weather and a nice time together.*

*Unfortunately, there was some sort of mix up at the boarding gate and the man was told he would have to wait for a later flight. He tried to appeal to the supervisor but was told the airline was not responsible for the problem and it would do no good to complain. Upon arrival at the hotel the next day, he discovered that Miami Beach was having a heat wave and its weather was almost as uncomfortably hot as Seattle’s was cold.*

The desk clerk gave him a message that his wife would arrive as planned. He could hardly wait to get to the pool area to cool off and quickly sent his wife an email via his palmtop, but due to his haste, he made an error in the address.

*His message therefore arrived at the home of an elderly preacher’s wife whose even older husband had died only the day before. When the grieving widow opened her email, she took one look at the monitor, let out an anguished scream and fell to the floor in a faint. Her family rushed to her room where they saw this message on the screen:*

*“Honey, departed yesterday as you know. Just now got checked in. Some confusion at the gate. Appeal was denied. Received confirmation of your arrival tomorrow. Your loving husband. P.S. Things are not as we thought. You’re going to be surprised at how hot it is down here.” (GCFN 6/1/05)*

Tim Keller is another pastor facing death. Dr. Keller is the famous pastor of the Redeemer Church in New York City. I expect many of you may have heard of him or read his books etc. Dr. Keller is now living with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Two years ago his doctor informed him that at this stage, he is facing certain death. But in an article in the *New Your Times* posted Good Friday, he would say that the Easter message of Christ’s resurrection and ascension “changes everything!” He says:

If the Resurrection of Jesus Christ really happened, then ultimately, God is going to put everything right. Suffering is going to go away. Evil is going to go away. Death is going to go away. Aging is going to go away. Pancreatic cancer is going to go away. Now if the Resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen, then I guess all bets are off. But if it actually happened, then there’s all the hope in the world.

I know some...people are thinking, “I can’t believe there’s a person with more than a third-grade education that actually believes that.” But I do. . .

 I do think that the great thing about cancer is that Easter does mean a whole lot more because I look at Easter and I say, “Because of this, I can face anything.” In the past, I thought of Easter as a kind of optimistic, upbeat way of thinking about life. And now I see that Easter is a universal solvent. It can eat through any fear, any anger and despair. I see it as more powerful than ever before (Tish Harrison Warren – a priest in the Anglican Church in North America, Opinion Page, Dying Pastor and Jesus’ Return, NYTimes, April 15, 2022, pg. A18).

His newest book is *Hope in Times of Fear: The Resurrection and the Meaning at Easter*. Christ’s Resurrection brought life out of death, hope out of despair, victory out of evil and defeat. Jesus Christ our Lord is risen. He is risen indeed. So say this Resurrection shout with me:

 He is Risen! He is risen indeed!!

**Bible passages on the Resurrection**

Keller’s hope and the hope of all Christians since Christ died and rose from the dead is based on the truths of the Bible. We are in the Easter season for 40 days, so let me go over two of these famous texts and then share how This Changes Everything!

I Corinthians 15:1-8:  Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+Corinthians+15%3A1-8&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28680a)] of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. 2It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. 4He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 5He was seen by Peter[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+Corinthians+15%3A1-8&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28684c)] and then by the Twelve. 6After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+Corinthians+15%3A1-8&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28685d)] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. 8Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. NLT

That is the doctrine of the Resurrection. Now hear a first-hand account from meeting Jesus after He rose from the dead: Luke 24:30-48:

 30As they [the Emmaus disciples and Jesus] sat down to eat,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A+30-49&version=NLT#fen-NLT-25988a)] he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. 31Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! 32They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” 33

And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, 34who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A+30-49&version=NLT#fen-NLT-25992b)]” 35Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

 36Just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. 37But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! 38“Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? 39Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.” 40As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43and he ate it as they watched.

44Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. 47It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A+30-49&version=NLT#fen-NLT-26005c)] beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ 48You are witnesses of all these things. 49“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.” NLT

Notice that these scriptures focus on the proofs of Christ’ resurrection and the total change in life, perspective and calling this gave to His followers – and gives to us. Christ’s death is attested to in history. But so is his resurrection as eyewitnesses saw him in the 40 days until he ascended. Not only that but once the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost the lives of the Christians were so transformed that they turned their known world upside down. (Acts 17:6) We see those stories throughout the book of Acts (and in all history since).

Here is how Paul presented the resurrection to the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch: Acts 13:26-32

 26Brothers—you sons of Abraham, and also you God-fearing Gentiles—this message of salvation has been sent to us! 27The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets’ words that are read every Sabbath. 28They found no legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.

29When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+13%3A+26-37&version=NLT#fen-NLT-27356a)] and placed him in a tomb. 30But God raised him from the dead! 31And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel.

32And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors, 33and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus. . . 34For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave. NLT

Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit changes everything!!

**How So?**

Christ’s resurrection and ascension gave all His followers the focus and calling of their lives – to be His disciples and proclaim the good news of his salvation to all peoples. It gave them the power from the Spirit to do all he called them to do. It gave them the assurance that all that had been written by the prophets, historians and psalmists in the Old Testament was true and had been fulfilled in Him. It gives us God’s eternal life forever and an understanding of God’s victory over death, sin and the suffering that is rife throughout the world. It gives us the confidence that as believers in Christ we will be raised from the dead just as Jesus was and will be with Him and all God’s family forever after our death! It erases the fear of death and gives hope for the return of Jesus when all suffering and sorrow and death and evil will be eradicated forever. It gives us empowerment to defeat our sin and shame in Jesus’ name. It demonstrates to the world that Our God Reigns!

It is amazing good news! It changes everything!!!

**Two Stories**

Since the resurrection is foremost a story of life over death, let me close with two stories of how Christ’s resurrection transforms us when we pass from death to life literally.

A pastor whom I greatly respect, Lee Eclov from the Chicago area, said this as he preached the memorial service for an 88-year-old Christian believer:

He has left his Bible behind for now he is with the One whose very name is the Word. He has left his faith behind for now he sees face-to-face. He no longer struggles to find words for the love of God for now he is embraced by the Lord’s very presence. He no longer feels the weight of his years, nor the perplexity of heartbreaking problems, not the tears of this life, for he is home, safe and sound where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Lee Eclov, They Didn’t Know We Were Seeds, Preaching Today, 4 13 22).

And the testimony of a Christian woman who was anticipating her own impending death:

Helen had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given 3 months to live. As she was getting her things in order, she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at her service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. Helen also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible . . .and with a fork in her right hand. . . [As she explained to the pastor,] “In all my years of attending church social and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say ‘keep your fork.’ It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming – like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance! (Maybe like Judy bakes for you at Ocean Dunes!). So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder “What’s with the fork?” Then I want you to tell them: “Keep your fork…the best is yet to come”. . . Helen understood heaven. She KNEW that something better was coming: she was going to be with Jesus, her Savior and Lord (The fork 2/17/2000).

This IS the good news of the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Living Lord of heaven and earth. The One who holds the universe together by the word of his power and can hold believers together in the same way (Col 1:17). A good news that extends to eternity after we die and that is life-transforming as we walk with God day to day while we are still on earth.

Christ’s Resurrection brought life out of death, hope out of despair, and victory out of evil and defeat. Jesus Christ our Lord is risen. He is risen indeed. So let’s end this Resurrection sermon with the Resurrection shout . Say it with me:

 He is Risen! He is risen indeed!!

This Good News changes everything. May it transform us and all those we are in contact with in the coming weeks and months through the power of the precious Holy Spirit. Amen and Amen.

 Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson

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