

“Who is this King of Glory?” (Easter Sunday)

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Happy Easter everyone!

Millions of people are saying those words today, but I wonder what we mean by ‘Happy Easter.’ I think I would like to clear that up before we move into the sermon today. Is that ok? We know what ‘happy birthday’ means. We know what ‘happy anniversary’ means. But what does ‘Happy Easter’ really mean? Well, now seems like a good time to tell you exactly what I mean when I utter those two words, ‘Happy Easter.’

‘Happy’ doesn’t even begin to describe what I mean when I think of Easter, because this is not just some ho-hum, run-of-the-mill, sun comes up, sun comes down kind of day – with an insignificant historical footnote attached to it. This is not some day that is dedicated to chocolate eggs or the bunny that delivers them!

For years we have dressed up in our finest and gone to church to meet a bunch of people we may not have seen since Christmas but for the first time in my life, we can’t so that ... and maybe just this once, that’s not such a bad thing. Maybe it takes being forced out of our buildings and out of our comfort zone for us to really know what Easter is truly about.

You see, Easter is the day which followed after the most shameful of days ... you know the day we told God, ‘Thanks, but no thanks.’ The day we told God that we didn’t like who He was because He didn’t fit inside the nice little box we had created for Him. We found God, alright, we found God and dressed him up like some doll so we could mock him, whip him and execute him! That’s right, on *that* day we decided to nail Love to a tree.

Or maybe we wouldn’t have been the people who did *that* to Him. Maybe we were in the *other* camp, you know, the ones who scurried like mice into the dark corners of the earth, afraid for our pitiful lives, abandoning our weak faith with a moment’s notice! So for three days, we hid ourselves like Adam and Eve: ashamed at what we had done and who we had become. Still dead in our sins and hopeless for our souls.

So forgive me for feeling joyful when the earth trembled a couple of days later ... because *that* Easter day changed *everything*! Because on the other side of the worst man-made horror film that we had ever created ... there was an empty tomb! And it was the only day in history that made any other day worth living! On Easter, Christ rose from the dead and that means that I too have been resurrected from spiritual death and I am no longer a slave to sin. Joy has come! Hope has returned!

So I crawl out from the darkness of my life and I stand with pride in the bright light of this Easter morning. Declaring that I was a fool who no longer has to be foolish. I was a sinner who is no longer condemned. I was heading for destruction until God plucked me from despair.

There really is no word in our language which could adequately describe what I am feeling this day, but as I think about it, with a smile on my face, and joy in my heart, maybe ‘happy’ is as close as you can get to describing Easter. So there you go. That’s the extended version of what I meant when I wished you a ‘Happy Easter.’

So here we are again. It's Easter Sunday - the most exhilarating day of the year for Christians across the world both now, and in generations past. This is the day we remember, in a more focused way than every other day of the year, the miraculous, the wonderful, the essential, the life-restoring, the heaven-opening resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a glorious morning that was!

But if we are truly wanting to celebrate that day when Jesus rose again and conquered sin and death, our sin and death, then we need to begin, just for a moment, where that day began – in darkness and despair as we ask the Holy Spirit right now to open our hearts, open our spirits, so we might grasp the magnitude of the most devastating two words we could ever put together: **Christ died.**

Those words should be enough to break your heart into a thousand pieces and cast you to the floor in worship! Christ died - for you and me. I pray that we never lose the magnitude of that statement – never. The spotless, sinless Christ died.

But we join our hearts today to affirm that Christ did not remain dead. It is not just the cross of Christ which saves us. It is not just the death of Christ which brings us new life and eternity in the presence of our God. Without the resurrection, there is no gospel, there is no victory. If Christ had remained dead there would be nothing. All hope would be dashed for the entire human race.

But God the Father vindicated His only begotten son by raising Him from the dead! And by raising Christ from the dead, God placed His seal on the finished work of Christ. The resurrection was God's signature on your pardon from all sin - past, present and future! As God rolled that stone away and called forth His Son from the dead, He declared to all mankind, to every angel and demon and to Satan himself, *"The deal is done!"* The sins of humanity have now been atoned for and the righteousness of Christ is now given freely to all who believe! Christ died. Christ rose again from the dead. Then forty days later, Christ ascended to the right hand of His Father.

Now the ancients, the Patristic fathers of the first five centuries, would always use Psalm 24, the ascension Psalm, to describe when Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and I will read some of that to you in a moment. Now as Bible-believing evangelicals, we are constantly defending the deity of Christ, that is, His divine nature. Jesus Christ was God, in the most complete and fullest sense of the term. I don't know of too many committed Christians who stumble over that fact.

However on the flip side of that coin an equal truth which should not be stated or believed with any less intensity, is that Jesus Christ was a man – a human being – in the most complete and fullest sense of that term – just like you and me. There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity – the man, Jesus. Now I will use the term 'man' here to describe the race of humanity – there is no gender in theology. Man has sinned. The wages of sin is death. A man must die and a man must rise from the dead. The great Charles Spurgeon once said that a ladder that reaches only to the top will do us no good; and a ladder that reaches only to the bottom is no help at all. We need a ladder that reaches from the bottom to the top and the top to the bottom – we need a Saviour who is God and man! That man is Jesus!

Jesus died. Jesus rose again and He ascended to the right hand of the Father and listen to this friends – for the first time in the history of the universe, a man walked up to the doors of heaven and cried out what we find in verse 7 of Psalm 24. *"Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!"* And all of heaven behind those doors are in utter shock and silence and wonder. And finally a brave one lifts his head and begins to speak, *"Who is this King of Glory? Who dares speak to these doors! No man has ever dared come this far or lay his hand to the latch of this door! Who is this King of Glory?"*

Then, the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the man Who is *for us* - answers the question of all questions and says, *"The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.(now) lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!"*

Then for the first time ever – the doors of Heaven open for a man! He walked through those doors and everything that has ever been made, fell on its face! **All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him, crown Him Lord of all! Crown Him! Crown Him with many crowns, this Lamb upon the throne!**

I can just see Him now, walking up to His Father boldly, because it was His right! Climbing the steps of that throne which made Solomon's throne look like a Lego model, and this man, this Christ, sits down without even asking permission.

Then He looks at His Father and says, not as a question, but as an affirmation, *"Father, it is finished."*

And the Father says, *"Son, it is finished indeed!"*

This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and Christ of all! Don't think I am about to ask you to make Jesus Christ Lord of your life. I have never asked that of anyone and I never will. It is the most preposterous thing I could ever ask you to do. Jesus Christ *is* Lord of your life. Whether you serve Him or not. Whether you bless Him, curse Him, love Him or hate Him, He *is* the Lord of your life because God has made Him the Lord of your life and every life and all of creation!

God has given Him a name that is above every other name and at the name of Jesus Christ, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is both Lord and God! Some of you will bow the knee to Him out of the grace that has been given to you and others will bow because your kneecaps have been broken by the One who rules the nations with a rod of iron – but hear God's word today friends: every knee *will* bow and every tongue *will* confess that He is Lord.

I will never apologise for this Lord Whom I serve and before Whom I stand this day. He is the King of Glory. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the only reason any of you are still here and the only reason all of humanity has not been consumed by the holiness and purity and power of our God.

I want you to know that there is a God in heaven and He is worthy of all praise and all glory and all honour and He demands such from you and me. And He has made it possible, in His glory, in His grace, in His love, for you to come to Him today and every day. He cries out: *"All who are thirsty, come and drink. All who are hungry, come and eat. Why do you spend your money on that which will not satisfy? Come and drink my living water so you will never thirst again!"* (Isaiah 55:1-2).

This God is calling each one of you and me today, and every day, to repent and believe the gospel. To repent is simply to change your mind, your focus, your direction. You once thought this about God and yourself and your world, now you think this and walk in that reality and make whatever choices you need to in order to reflect that reality. That's what repentance is and God will give that to you also, as a free gift, if you ask Him here today and every day. Believing the gospel is also not complicated.

You have heard the gospel from me and from others I'm sure – the good news of what God has done for us in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how that work of God, in Christ, has dealt with the problem of sin and unholiness forever so we can now enter into the reality of God's kingdom now and into fellowship with Him in Christ now – not just after we leave this world. Believe that Truth, believe that gospel and your life will change. You will never be the same again!

You may have joined us today just because that's what you do on Easter Sunday and have always done. It's a family tradition. Nothing wrong with that. But God was already waiting for you and He has so much more for you today if you will let Him speak to you. Some of you will connect with us again next week and some of you will not. But I believe with all my heart that each one of you has been brought to this online service today by God, not so you can celebrate a religious festival. God couldn't care less about our religious festivals! God brought you here today to bless you with the Truth – a Truth that will set you gloriously and permanently free - a Truth that will open your eyes and your heart and your spirit to God's amazing grace, God's undeserved forgiveness and God's overwhelming, unconditional love.

God loves you – just as you are – with all your sin and all your doubt and all your fear - God loves you. He is asking that you let His love break through to your heart; let His love push past any preconceptions you have of Him or the Church He promised to build in Christ, through Christ and fore Christ; let His love drive out any fear; let His love overcome any bad experiences you may have had at the hands of fallible Christians; let His love heal you, restore you and draw you back to the place your spirit has been longing to be since you were born – the presence of God.

As you receive His love and embrace what He has done for you in Christ, I guarantee His love will transform your life and change the way you think and feel and live and relate to people. When the Spirit of God opens your eyes to God's kingdom, God's reality – it is like walking out of the optometrist with your first set of spectacles and looking up the street and seeing a whole new world. It was always there. It was always clear to those who could see. But now, *you* can see it too with a new clarity and with that new vision, comes a whole new world for you.

Then maybe those words written by a reformed slave trader after he got His spiritual spectacles, will be your words: *"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found – was blind, but now I see!"* May that be your testimony this day, for then it will truly be a 'Happy Easter.'

As Jesus stood before His friend, the Apostle Peter many years ago, He looked Him in the eye and asked him the most important question of Peter's life: *"Who do you say that I am?"* Friends, that same Jesus is looking each of us in the eye today and He is asking the same question: *"Who do you say that I am?"* There are only three possible answers. Choose one carefully. He is either a liar, a lunatic or the Lord of all creation.

Now if you can read the Bible and look at the course of human history and search the depths of your own heart and declare that Jesus is a liar or a lunatic – then I bless you and respect your conclusion and your life will be lived in the shadow of that conclusion.

But if you are left with no alternative but to acknowledge Jesus Christ is, in fact, the Lord of Lords and the King of Glory I read to you in Psalm 24, then I ask you now, God asks you now: how then shall you live today, tomorrow and the rest of your days in the shadow of that conclusion – that spiritual revelation?

If Jesus Christ is the Lord of all creation and the Lord of your life, what is your response? Don't wait until next Easter to ponder this, do it now and join us again next week as we explore this wonderful life in Christ together.