

“Christ is risen. In him we rise!” Romans 6:1–9

*Alleluia! Christ is risen!*

*He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

There is no greater phrase than these three words: Christ is risen! They bring hope to those who are living in despair and joy to those overcome by grief.

For the last six weeks, we’ve been on a quest to express the gospel of Jesus Christ in just seven words. Because if we can do that, we have grasped the essence of our faith. Those of you who were part of this all along made some great contributions to that. But today we will come up with one more to reflect Jesus’s Easter victory over the grave. We have our first three words already: “Christ is risen!” But we’ve still got four more words to finish the sentence.

There are a number of ways we could go: For instance, “Christ is risen. Let’s go hunt eggs!” Maybe you did or will do that this morning, but there is much more to Easter than chocolate and bunnies.

How about this? “Christ is risen, and breakfast was delicious!” While that is most certainly true, that does not quite catch the essence of our Easter faith either.

Perhaps some of you have family home. Maybe you’re thinking, “Christ is risen. The gang’s all here!” That’s good news, but not *The Good News*.

The good news is so much more life changing than these Easter traditions and celebrations. So, let’s think about some other options.

Before he died, Jesus told his disciples several times that he would rise from the dead. The Old Testament prophets who lived hundreds of years before Jesus also said that he would rise from the dead. His resurrection fulfilled God’s word throughout the ages. It proved that He was God and that everything He said was true and trustworthy. So here’s one: “Christ is risen, just as he said!”

Very true and significant, but Easter is about more than past prophecy. It is also about the future. So let’s try another. One thing in our future that is certain, along with taxes, is death. But the resurrection of Jesus shows that death is not the end of our story. Through faith in Christ and the promise God makes to us in our baptism, we will live even after death. So how about these seven words: “Christ is risen, so we’ll live forever!”

That also is true and of utmost importance. But even as Easter is about more than past promises, it’s also about more than eternal life in the future. Easter also changes everything in the present, right here and right now. So let’s give it one more try.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul talks about baptism. He says this, *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4). God’s gift to us in baptism is an Easter gift. It is the gift of resurrection.

And this is not just a resurrection on the last day. God’s Easter gift to us is new life here and now. It is a new life in which God raises us above all that is wrong with this world.

He raises us above guilt and shame because Jesus left our sin in the tomb. He raises us above selfishness and greed, because Jesus provides for all that we need. He raises us above resentment and anger, because Jesus fills us with joy and peace.

Because of Easter, we don’t have to live in shame. Because of Easter we don’t have to work so hard to serve ourselves. Because of Easter we can forgive those who have sinned against us, for Christ has forgiven our sin against him. That is new life, and it is what God gives you and me here again this day.

Perhaps you’ve been here all Lent and you’ve been wondering how we’d confess the gospel in seven words today. Or, perhaps you’re here because a friend or family invited you. Or maybe you’re here simply because that’s what you do on Easter Sunday.

Whatever the reason, I want you to know and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. God offers you peace and joy in His resurrection. I want you to believe, and to confess, this incredibly good news of the gospel. This morning we’ll make it simple. Just seven words that change our lives forever.

“Christ is risen! In him we rise!”

May God grant it for Jesus’s sake—today and everyday! Amen