

## Sermonette for April 9, 2023 – Easter Sunday

John 14:19 (EHV)

Theme: Jesus' Resurrection declares believers:

- 1) Alive Now.
- 2) Alive Forever.

[Jesus said:] *Because I live, you also will live.*

On July 2, 1776, a significant event occurred for our neighbours to the south: The Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution to declare the United States independent from Great Britain. But if that's the case, why do Americans celebrate Independence Day on July 4<sup>th</sup>? Because the document explaining what this vote meant – “The Declaration of Independence” – wasn't approved until July 4<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, even though America's independence officially took place on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Americans celebrate it on the 4<sup>th</sup>, when the document that publicly announced and explained America's independence was approved.

Why am I mentioning this tidbit of US history on Easter? To help explain the importance of Easter in connection with Jesus' sacrifice on Good Friday. The moment Jesus declared, “It is finished” from the cross, our sins were paid in full. Sin, death, and the devil were defeated. Our liberty from them was won!

If that is the case, why do Christians celebrate Easter more than Good Friday? For example, why do we worship on Sunday (commemorating Christ's resurrection) instead of on Friday (commemorating Jesus' sacrifice)? It's because Jesus' resurrection is God's public declaration of our forgiveness, life, and salvation – showing the world exactly what Jesus accomplished for us through his cross. Let us consider this truth under the theme: **Jesus' Resurrection declares believers:** 1) Alive Now. 2) Alive Forever.

Part One: Alive Now

Jesus once told his disciples: “*Because I live, you also will live.*” What does he mean by that? Let's state the obvious: without Christ, we would all be dead. How so? Because, without Christ, our sins separate us from God. And that is what death is: a separation. When the soul separates from the body, we die physically. When our sins separate us from our Creator, we die spiritually.

That invites the question: what is sin, and how does it separate us from God? Sin is doing the opposite of what God commands and, therefore, breaks our relationship with God. Because our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into sin, we all have inherited a corrupt, selfish nature from them – one that trusts the devil's lies instead of God's Word. Yes, apart from Christ, we are all spiritually dead, as the apostle Paul states in his letter to the Ephesians: *You, too, were dead in your transgressions and sins,<sup>2</sup> in which you once followed the ways of this present world and the ruler whose power is in the air, the spirit who is now working in the people who disobey.<sup>3</sup> Among them all of us once lived in our fleshly lusts, doing what our flesh and mind wanted to do, and by nature*

*we, like the others, were people with whom God was angry. But God, Who is rich in mercy, loved us with such a great love. He made us who were dead in sins alive with Christ.<sup>i</sup>*

Yes, God made us alive in Christ! How? Jesus' suffering and death on the cross fully paid for our sins. Want proof? It's found in Jesus' resurrection. How so? Because if the wage of sin is death, as the Bible clearly states, then Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves that sin has been paid for in full.

And if sin has been paid for in full, then the devil can no longer hold mastery over us. How so? Because the devil has nothing of which to accuse us before God. Christ's resurrection declares humanity reconciled to God. Through faith in Jesus, we receive the benefits of this reconciliation personally.

Jesus said, *"Because I live, you also will live."* All who look to Jesus in faith are reunited with God through him. They are spiritually alive. Because of their Baptisms, God puts his names on them and unites them to Christ in such a unique way that Christ lives in and with them – guarding, guiding, and counselling them by means of the Holy Spirit working through his Word; as Jesus promised before his ascension: *"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*<sup>ii</sup>

Yes, Jesus' resurrection assures us that all who look to Him in repentance and faith are spiritually alive, as he once promised: <sup>24</sup> *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. <sup>25</sup> I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."*<sup>iii</sup>

## Part Two: Alive Forever

And that brings me to the next point I want to make about Jesus' resurrection. Because he physically rose from the dead, believers will also rise to live with him forever; as Jesus once said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*<sup>iv</sup> Do you understand what Jesus meant by that? He is the resurrection and life: whoever believes in him (that is to say, whoever repents of sin and trusts in Jesus to forgive him) – will live even though he dies. In other words, even though we all physically die, believers will rise from the dead to live with God forever in glory. Why? Because whoever lives and believes in Jesus never really dies; that is to say – a believer is never separated from God and his love but always lives at peace with him. Even when the believer dies physically, his soul is still alive – living with God in heaven.

And the believer's body? It will rest in the grave - waiting for the day Jesus will physically raise all the dead so that we might live with him forever in the paradise God promises to give us.

Do you now understand why we Christians emphasize Easter so much? While Good Friday was the day Jesus won our forgiveness, Easter Sunday was the day he declared it by rising from the dead. Easter Sunday is the day Jesus powerfully revealed precisely what he won for us: eternal life, joy, peace, and salvation.

Jesus said, “*Because I live, you also will live.*” Rejoice in this truth and celebrate the life you have through faith in Christ Jesus. His rising from the dead assures you that you are forgiven and at peace with God. Through faith, he has raised you to a new life that will never end in death but continue forever with God in the glorious paradise that he is even now preparing for us. Alleluia, the LORD is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.

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<sup>ii</sup> Ephesians 2:1-5 AAT

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 28:20 NIV84

<sup>iii</sup> John 5:24–25 NIV84

<sup>iv</sup> John 11:25-26 NIV84