

## The Easter Victory.

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:57

Suggested Hymns:

88, 92, 95, 91, 97

1) The Glory of the Easter Victory

2) The Response That This Victory Demands

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 15:57, <sup>57</sup> ***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We greet this blessed day with joyful spirits and singing hearts. But it was not like that with the friends of Jesus at the first Easter dawning. With their own hands they had prepared His lifeless body for the burial and laid it in Joseph's tomb. They were now, with heavy hearts and leaden steps, on their way to complete that last labour of love.

But soon their grief was turned to joy. The tomb was empty! A heavenly herald proclaimed to them the risen Christ. Ever since, Christians do not assemble on this day to lament a fallen hero, but to thank and praise their risen, living Lord, who shares with them *The Easter Victory*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. The Glory Of The Easter Victory

Firstly, the resurrection of our Lord is glorious in its defeat of every enemy. The Scriptures declare in 1 John 3:8, ***For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.***

No sooner was the Son of God made manifest in the flesh than Satan began his relentless efforts to overthrow God's Son and mankind's Saviour. The devil stirred the dark passions of that monster Herod to slaughter the babies of Bethlehem in a mad attempt to eliminate an imagined rival in the person of the new-born Christ Child.

Years later in the wilderness, Jesus, weakened by forty days of fasting, wrestled with the prince of hell and was subjected to every temptation hell could devise. The devil was decisively beaten, but not discouraged.

Again, in Gethsemane as the weight of the world's sin lay crushingly upon Jesus, the bitter cup of suffering rose before Him with a new and terrifying vividness. This was the hour of darkness, and Satan used it for all it was worth. But all the attempts of this archenemy were frustrated when Jesus resigned Himself to the will of His heavenly Father, saying, "*Thy will be done.*"<sup>1</sup>

Then came the attempts of other enemies. The mad Herod found his successors in the chief priests, the scribes, and other leaders who endeavoured to succeed where he had failed.

Even after they had nailed Jesus to the Cross, they were not completely satisfied. In one last frantic effort they persuaded Pilate to seal the tomb and place a guard at its entrance. When even this failed to keep Christ in the grave, they tried to suppress the proclamation of His victorious resurrection by threats and force — but in vain.

Today some people are still vainly trying to keep Christ in the grave. They are the sceptics and unbelievers, among them many teachers and clergymen. Ironically enough, there are those who are observing this Easter Day by virtually denying the actual resurrection of our Lord, giving to it only a symbolical meaning; explaining that Jesus was resurrected only in the minds and hearts of His followers; stressing only the renewal of all nature in the springtime. In this way they want to reduce the greatest miracle of all time to a pious mirage.

But tragic also is the prospect that even some people who do go to church, being professed Christians, but by their little faith, fear and doubt, live and act as if Jesus was still in the grave.

In effect they keep Jesus there as far as they are concerned. On this Easter Day we pray, "*Lord, increase our faith!*"<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the glory of the Easter victory is glorious in its certainty. We are happy that the enemies of Jesus sealed and guarded the tomb. For their efforts to suppress His victory have served only to confirm it and make it better known. Unwittingly they became the first witnesses to His resurrection. Thus it is

ultimately with all man's opposition to God, that *the wrath of man shall praise [God]* as Scripture says in Psalm 76:10.

The certainty of the Lord's resurrection is attested also by His disciples, who saw Him, spoke with Him, and ate with Him at different times and places. In some respects, these were the most sceptical of all; for we read in Mark 16:14, *“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.* But the risen Christ overcame their unbelief.

Again, the very observance of the first day of the week, instead of the seventh, in the Christian Church is a witness to the resurrection of our Lord. Were it not for the resurrection fact, the early Christians would not have dared to depart from the Old Testament Sabbath. Thus our observance of Sunday is not only a reminder, but an eloquent proof of our Lord's victory.

Also, the Christian Church itself is evidence of His Easter victory. The amazing transformation of fearful disciples into bold preachers of the Gospel can be accounted for only on the basis of their having seen their crucified Lord alive again.

Those early witnesses of the resurrection laid down their lives for their faith in a truly resurrected Christ; not for a phantom. That faith has been vindicated throughout twenty one centuries of Gospel preaching. The Christian Church is nothing less than the victorious Church of the Resurrection.

Thirdly, the glory of the Easter victory is glorious in its meaning for us today. It assures us that Christ is the Son of God and that His doctrine is truth. Jesus had on numerous occasions not only predicted His death, but also His resurrection. No mere mortal could seriously make such a claim.

God alone has the power over death. By His resurrection Jesus proved Himself to be the true God. And being God, His doctrine is true.

What does that mean to you? It gives you the answer to man's age-old quest for truth' about God and about himself. Having God's truth, you need no longer grope about in the dark for the answers to life's great questions nor become the victim of religious racketeers and self-styled authorities in spiritual matters.

God has given you the answer in Christ. ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”***<sup>3</sup> ***“If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”***<sup>4</sup>

The resurrection victory of our Lord likewise certifies that God has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the payment of the sins of the world. All the barriers that stood between man and God have been removed.

What does that mean to you? It means that through faith in Him you can begin each day with the buoyant assurance that you are a redeemed child of God. You can meet every opportunity, every obligation, every challenge together with God, your heavenly Father. At the end of each day you can close your eyes in peace. ***The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus***<sup>5</sup> — now and forever.

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus also assures us that because He lives, we, too, shall live. ***“O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?”***<sup>6</sup> ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”***<sup>7</sup> You feel the tremendous power of those words as you stand beside the deathbed of a loved one.

Here, then, is the true test of any religion: How does it handle the mystery of death? From time immemorial men have speculated and philosophised about it, but in the end they, too, died. None ever returned from the grave to tell us about it. Many have talked about death, but only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done something about it.

Other leaders invite us to follow them into death. Jesus alone invites us to go with Him, through death, into life! With Job you can exult, ***this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God.***<sup>8</sup>

## **2. The Response That This Victory Demands**

Pondering all this, we must exclaim with the Apostle, <sup>57</sup> ***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Thanks be to God! The Easter victory which Jesus has won for us and given to us by His grace places us under eternal obligation to Him. It is not one of

compulsion, but of grateful, joyful, unselfish devotion to Him, to His will, and to His work on earth.

True gratitude to God is first of all an attitude of the adoring heart. But it is not confined within. True gratitude cannot be “bottled up.” Its very nature is to overflow from the lives of grateful children of God and make itself seen and felt in the world, to the glory of God in a many different ways.

The foremost of these is the testimony of a Christian life, the witness of a grateful child of God to His risen Lord and Saviour. In an Easter poem, Edwin Markham endeavours to portray the remorse which later haunted one of the bribed soldiers who had guarded Jesus’ tomb.

Confessing that he had indeed witnessed the resurrection, but then failed to proclaim it, he laments:

Years have I wandered, carrying my shame;  
Now let the tooth of time eat out my name.  
For I, who the wonder might have told,  
Kept silent, for my mouth was stopped with gold.

His mouth was stopped with gold. Is anything stopping our mouth today? Is it perhaps shame? fear? Are we “too busy”?

If so, then ours is not a truly grateful heart. Then we still do not understand the blessed victory that is ours, nor realise and appreciate its obligation of love.

We should realise today that God has placed us in a unique period of this world’s history. We could call it the social media age, the communication age or the nuclear age. Much of it results in unrest and uncertainty. As we read in Luke 21:26, <sup>26</sup> ***“men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.”***

In this unique period of history God has also given to His Church on earth unique opportunities, both as to the types of work and to the means at our disposal. Mission doors are open all over the world. Thousands, yes, millions of people are destitute, discouraged, without hope, without homes, and without food. This constitutes an unprecedented challenge to those who profess the love of Christ, who says in Matthew 25:40, ***inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.***

While our personal witnessing among our family, friends, and neighbours will always remain the prime opportunity for grateful service to our Lord, we dare not overlook the other avenues of communication, such as the press, radio, television, and the internet. The new world opened up by the first crude printing press in the fifteenth century has long since been dwarfed by modern means of communication.

But all these means will remain ineffective unless they are motivated by grateful hearts. The first disciples out of gratitude for the resurrection victory nobly fulfilled their obligation in their day.

We pray that God will forgive us all past neglectfulness and inactivity, and fill us with sincere gratitude, and make us fit for the task given to us in our period in time. *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.<sup>9</sup>*

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,

He is risen, He is risen!  
Tell it with a joyful voice;  
He has burst His three days' prison.  
Let the whole wide world rejoice.  
Death is conquered, man is free,  
Christ has won the victory. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 26:42

<sup>2</sup> Luke 17:5

<sup>3</sup> John 14:6

<sup>4</sup> John 8:31-32

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 4:7

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55

<sup>7</sup> John 11:25

<sup>8</sup> Job 19:26

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58