

April 20, 2025
Easter Sunday

THE Living One

Luke 24:1-12

A better translation of the angels' words to the women at the tomb might be: "*Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.*" "*Living one*": that is what the original Greek literally says. I think this is pretty significant.

How many human beings are there that have bodily risen to eternal life after dying? One; only one. There is only one physically living eternal life in His human body and soul. It is Jesus; the living One. St. Paul writes to the church that this living One is the "*firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" going on to explain that those who belong to Christ will one day, the day of His second coming, be made alive...like Him; the living One. Alleluia! He is risen!

That Jesus, "the living One" is indeed the firstfruits is the whole point of our certain hope in Him. The perfect and eternal life He this very day lives in our humanity is the point of our faith, that the curse of sin and death upon humanity stands lifted, so we possess by grace through this faith the very same life. Because He lives we do not die! We inherit a different life from the fallen one we now live; the true perfect life the "living one" now lives. This is the message of Easter.

We look back at the history of the Christian church right down into our present day and we're moved by the multitude of saints who have willingly given themselves over to death to this life rather than renounce their faith. How can they do this? We know how! Because they trust in the same risen Christ we do—the living One who faced death and lives, thus so do we! This is what the Christian church has always proclaimed and believed.

But despite this wonderful truth, St. Paul writes to the church at Corinth those very strange words: "*If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*" What is he talking about? Well, some folks in that church were denying the resurrection! They were so enamored with the thinking of their culture that they allowed it to overrule Paul's clear teaching of the Gospel and they redefined what Christ was all about.

This is the tension that you and I live in as Christians. Jesus says in a prayer to His Father that His followers are "not of the world." But we're here, in the fallen world. We proclaim "He is risen" and look forward to joining our "living One" in that perfect life He now lives, but this life, well, it needles us, it distracts us, it tempts us, it tries to wear us down with its many frustrations and hardships, and sometimes it hauls off and very painfully wounds us. And, by the grace of the Holy Spirit we do what comes naturally to a believer—we run to our Lord in prayer.

This is right and good. Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth. His Spirit can strengthen us in the face of temptation. He can cause healing of body and soul. He strengthens the weary. He can bring our afflictions to an end. He can deliver us from evil. He most certainly forgives our sins and failures when we repentantly bring them before Him. We do put our hope in Christ for this life...but NOT for this life only. We do not fall into the trap of redefining Christ as being completely about this life!

Our hope does not stop here. In fact it doesn't really dwell here at all. Though we may look to Him and call to Him for relief and blessings here and now, our true and enduring hope is always aimed at Him, where He is, beyond this life toward the one He now lives.

It's a challenge. The world is right there in front of our face every day. There are a lot of good things, hopes and dreams that we'd like to do with this life. God blesses us in many ways.

But is this life the one to which Christ rose? No! It's the one to which He died on Good Friday. It is the fallenness and sins of this life He Himself dragged to the tomb to be put to death in His body. Yes, we seek God's blessings and favor here, but this life is temporary and any hope we have about this life knows that.

"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The true promise in which we find our ultimate hope is not about this life—in Adam all die—it is about the resurrection after this life comes to an end!

The resurrection of Christ we celebrate today is why even in the face of death we do not despair. Death isn't pretty. It was horrible on Calvary and it is horrible when it comes for us. You young folks are full of strength and energy, but there always comes that day when you are getting up out of the recliner and you hear something; it's the old person groan and it's coming from your own mouth. This life is broken by sin and thus, it doesn't last. It decays or is snatched away. It is temporary.

But death is less than temporary! *"The last enemy to be destroyed is death"* and death stands vanquished by the empty tomb! Death is now the doorway to life with Christ; the living One. So we look to Him, the risen Christ, knowing that while He indeed is with us in this life and does help and bless us according to His perfect will, His most important work is always that of forgiving our sins and in that gift carrying us through this afflicted life and into the perfect life He now lives!

So make sure you get this Easter message straight. You are going to face challenges, injustices, hardships, afflictions and downright evil in this world. You're even going to afflict yourself because of that fallen nature causing us to do the very sin we'd love to purge from ourselves. And yes, unless Jesus returns (and we hope He does) you will face death in one of its many ugly forms.

But take heart! Your life is not in this broken life anymore! You stand baptized into the living One; Christ the Lord resurrected from the dead never to die again! Your sins stand forgiven and you are one with the holy Son of God made holy Son of Man for your salvation. His pain and suffering was temporary as was His death, but His reign is without end! And you are His, here today as a sojourner in the temporary tent of this life, but one day soon as a truly living saint in the perfect life of which Christ is our firstfruits.

So when this life does its worst, remember that this isn't really your life anymore. Your life is now the same life Jesus, THE living One now lives forever. Take heart and move on through your days toward paradise, knowing that your life is assured, because He is risen!

Hallelujah! Amen!