

# This Is Your Life

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about your life. Today, we're going to find out how.

People of a certain age, such as I, might remember a TV show (which had previously been a radio show) from the early days of TV called "This Is Your Life."

It was a show where guests would be surprised and ushered onto a sound stage, where they would hear the story of their lives, often accompanied by in-person visits from the people who had been influential and important to them.

The show featured the challenges as well as the high points of the guest's life, and they had the chance to say "Thank you" to some of the people who had helped them along the way.

Today we will hear the story of the most important event ever in the lives of all human beings. And it's a beautiful day!

We've had a lot of rain this year. The Sierra snowpack is 300% of normal. The reservoirs are almost full. Watering restrictions have been cancelled, though we are still advised not to waste water.

The snow in the mountains was 12' feet deep in some places and still may still be coming. People were trapped in their houses. Local grocery stores were closed because the snow had compromised the integrity of their roofs, but many people weren't able to get to them anyway.

There was a little water feature just up the street on Garfield Avenue that was water draining out of a manhole cover for weeks!

And now people are dreading the snowpack melt which is projected to bring flooding. We might even get a little more rain and snow this Thursday!

For people who had become almost accustomed to a drought, this has all been very unfamiliar territory.

But, something we do know about is earthquakes.

That's how the first Easter Sunday began. With a display of the power of nature and of nature's God, in **Matthew 28:1-2**,

*<sup>1</sup>After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.*

What is happening?! The stone covering the tomb of Jesus, sealed by the Roman Empire, and guarded by battle-hardened Roman legionnaires, is rolled back by an angel and is used as his easy chair in act of power and defiance.

What was this thing? Who was this thing?

It was an angel of the Lord. God's Seal Team Six. Matthew describes the reaction in **verses 3-4**,

*<sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.*

The biggest drama in our homes this morning might have been getting everybody dressed for church and out the door. At the first Easter, strong men were going catatonic with was happening.

The guards weren't just terrified by the appearance of the angel. They were terrified because they knew what the stakes were. They could be executed for not doing their job. It sounds like they had passed out with fear.

And what are the first words to the women out of the mouth of the angel of the Lord. What are always the first words out of the mouth of an angel of the Lord? "Do not be afraid." Matthew continues in **verses 5-7**,

*<sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."*

People usually see angels when they are there to deliver a message from God. That's what angels do. They are messengers.

The angel of the Lord had delivered **the** message of all time, "He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said."

Jesus had given his life and now he had taken it back again.

The women rushed away to tell Jesus' disciples the good news. They were the first evangelists. But the men **had** to know what had happened because the women's testimony would not have been admissible. Yet the Gospel, the good news, was entrusted to them. Women.

That's one of the evidences for the reliability of the Resurrection. If you were making up a story in first century Israel, or pretty much anywhere else in the world back then, the last people you would place at the center of an event would be women. It was Patriarchy. Their testimony was believed to be inherently unreliable. Yet there they were, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, at the center of **the** event, the first witnesses, entrusted with the most important news every told. What could possibly top that??

Matthew continues with **verses 8-9**,

*<sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.*

The women are intercepted on their way. By Jesus. He says, "Greetings!" Remember that word from an earlier part of the story? It was in the greeting from the angel Gabriel to Mary, the mother of Jesus. "Greetings, favored one!" Something was about to be entrusted to the women at the tomb by God.

This was not normal. You just don't bump into people who you know are dead. Or were. Or something. And what did Jesus say to them next? "Do not be afraid," in **verse 10**,

*<sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

Jesus instructs the women to **do** something: "**Go** and tell my brothers."

And what are they to tell the disciples to **do**? "To **go** to Galilee; there they will see me."

Why are they to go to Galilee? To get out of town? To return to familiar surroundings? To prepare for what's coming? To be with their families?

Who knows what the purpose of their visit was, but we do know the reason. "There you will see me."

At some point when I'm reading a novel or a short story, I like to peek ahead to find out how it's going to end. The end doesn't interest me as much as how the author gets there. Same with a movie. I'll sometimes read the plot online.

Do you want to take a peek ahead? Do you want to see what happens when the disciples get to Galilee and see the risen Jesus? It's not in today's text. We will see it in our Gospel reading in about nine weeks, but let's take a peek today, just a few verses down in the same chapter, in **Matthew 28 (Spoiler alert!) 18-20**,

*18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

There's that word again, "Go.". Go, where he calls you to be and you will see him. Go and share the Good News with the world!

What's the good news? Paul describes it in **Romans 6:3-5**,

*<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

Newness of life here and now.

Eternal life beginning now and extending for ever in the resurrection to come!

One of my uncles, Uncle Jimmy, was developmentally delayed. He lived with his parents, my grandparents, then with his sister, then in a home. He barely spoke, except in words of one syllable. I'd call him once a month or so and our conversations were usually always the same, "Hey, Uncle Jimmy" Hello. "This is your nephew David." Yeah.

"How are you doing?" Fine. "Are you getting enough to eat?" Yeah. "Are you getting fat?" HaHa. No." "Are you keeping busy?" Yeah. "What are you working on?" Coasters. "I think the Packers are going to do pretty well this year." Yeah. "Well, talk to you later" OK. Then he would call his sister and say, "Guess who just called me!"

When his sister, my aunt, died, one of her sons, my cousin, told me a story.

He said that when he went to tell Uncle Jimmy that his sister had died, he was quiet and looked out a window for a long time. Then he said, "But, who's going to take care of me?" My cousin answered, "Ann (another cousin) will, and we'll all look out for you. But, someday you and Barbara and all of us will see each other again in heaven."

My uncle said, "Won't that be a wonderful day, when Jesus comes and opens up all the graves, and we'll all rise and be with him forever."

That was the highest number of words I ever heard my uncle speak, and it was a statement of God's promise and of our future hope. The outcome of the faith we have been given by God.

It's easy to say what Easter is all about. It's not always easy to live it.

Have you noticed that there have been a lot of train derailments in the news lately?

I worked for the Soo Line Railroad in Wisconsin during summers in college and seminary. We maintained the rails, and sometimes repaired them, in the same way and with the same manual tools that crews had been using for about 100 years. Trains go off track the same ways lives do, including lives of faith.

Sometimes the tracks go off balance. A side of our life has sunk lower, and we find that our lives are derailed.

Sometimes the foundation below us has eroded and there's a dip, and we wake up one day and find that our lives are a wreck.

Sometimes we go too fast for the conditions, and we find that we've gone off-track

Sometimes we find that our lives are on-track, but the spikes connecting us to our foundations are missing and we slide off-course.

Sometimes, we find that the things that we have built our lives on are rotten and need to be replaced.

Sometimes the rails have moved too far apart, and we just collapse into the gap in our lives.

In all these things, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ brings an answer to all who are baptized and believe.

*"so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

Life is full of Good Fridays, but there is one Resurrection for all who believe.

Tim Keller, the Christian author and pastor of a large Presbyterian church in Manhattan, once said, "When people tell me that they once were believing Christians but now have rejected it all-I often ask them (after long, close listening) why they originally believed Jesus rose from the dead and how they came to decide that he now didn't. They usually say it's a helpful question."

It is a helpful question, because whatever else the Christian faith is and however it is expressed and lived, it is built on three words, "He is Risen!"

The cross is the main event. Jesus died to save us. But the resurrection tells us that he was who he said he was, not just another guy who died. He gave his life, and he took it back again. He is God. And he loves us. And he shows his love for us on the cross and in the empty tomb!

This is what we know. He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! It is obvious to us, but not so to everyone. Go and tell the good news to somebody. Tell your story. Ask others, "Have you heard about Jesus?" Share how you became a Christian, and why you remain one.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, seek to live a life that demonstrates a superior alternative to the world, and to what the world only sees about Christians on the news. Express yourself through the arts. Embody holy living.

You are a new creation in Jesus Christ. Because he lives, you shall live also. Today is Easter Sunday. The Resurrection of Our Lord. This is your life!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!