

Sermon Easter 2022: Living in God's Different Reality for our Lives – Faith-filled

Introduction: A New Reality

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (The Lord is risen in deed! Alleluia!)

Of all the statements made since the beginning of the world;

Of all the events that have taken place since the start of time;

None is more important; none is more powerful;

None is more life changing for you and me than the Easter acclamation;

For because Christ is risen from the dead;

A new reality has taken hold in the world;

And in your life and in mine.

For since Christ is risen from the dead, the reality and finality of death has been turned around;

Death no longer has the final word, the final reality in our lives;

For because Christ is risen, we will be raised, too,

Risen in a life, in an adventure with God that has no ending.

And our loved ones who are gone from us, gone through the door of death, are alive with God;

Alive and living the life that is fuller and greater and more beautiful than this life;

And one day we will be with them again.

For since Christ is risen from the dead, the reality of the power of sin no longer binds us;

No longer holds us back from becoming the people God has created and called us to be.

The brokenness in our relationships with God,

The brokenness in our relationships with one another have been mended, restored;

Or will be mended when we ask for forgiveness for ourselves and offer it to others;

We can start over; we can take a do over, again and again;

For the One who promises forgiveness, Jesus Christ;

Actually has the power to forgive and to restore and to mend;

And He has given that power to us, as well.

For since Christ is risen from the dead;

Our aloneness, our loneliness, our separation from God, is over forever;

Because He is out there in the world and He's in here in this place with us;

We have a companionship and a friendship and a love that has no end.

And fear, that old enemy that creeps into our hearts and minds in the middle of the night;

The fear that comes to us in the darkness or stalks us in the full light of day

With all the concerns and worries and potential catastrophes that we think await us;

Fear has been overcome and we have been given a hope beyond hope;

In a life of faith in God that has no end.

For since Christ is risen from the dead we have a new life, a new purpose;

A reason for living that brings hope and peace and love and adventure.

And the challenge that is before all of us in the midst of this good news, this fantastic new reality

Is to accept it; is to take hold of it;

Is to live it in such a way that we are drawn ever closer to God's new reality.

The challenge is to live our lives with a different heart, a renewed mind, with new eyes

That look to this new reality of life and forgiveness and companionship and hope;

So that the new reality that broke into the world that first Easter, with Jesus's resurrection
Will become the reality of our lives today and for always.

The Empty Tomb

Now the women at the tomb and later Peter and the other early followers of Jesus

Came to the tomb expecting the old reality;

They expected the reality that knew that when you were dead you were forever dead;

If they and people before them knew one thing,

They knew that when you died that was the end of it.

Oh, they had heard Jesus speak of this other reality;

He had told them again and again that He would be betrayed

And handed over to the authorities and killed;
And on the third day would be raised from the dead.

But apart from the few times they had witnessed Jesus raising someone from the dead;
People like Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son and Lazarus;
Everyone else they knew that had died had stayed dead;
And a dead Jesus is unlikely to have had the power to be raised Himself.

And all the other new realities that Jesus practiced and promised and taught;
The forgiveness, the healing, the promise of life with God and God's kingdom come;
Were realities that would never come true in their lives
Or in the life of the world, because the author of this new reality was dead and gone
And the old reality of death and unforgiveness and aloneness was still in power.

It had been a wonderful and life-giving three years, but they were over;
And the best they could do was honor their friend, grieve and get back to their old lives.

So when they came to the empty tomb, expecting a lifeless body and instead;
Heard heavenly messengers remind them what Jesus had told them again and again;
They were terrified and amazed all at the same time;
Terrified at all that had taken place and the men in white
Amazed at the hope that began to stir in their hearts.

Terrified and amazed until they remembered; until they remembered Jesus' promise;
And the hope in the new reality began to dawn upon them;
The new reality began to kiss their souls and light up their lives;
For if Jesus were indeed raised from the dead
Then all He had told them and taught them and shown them about God's kingdom
And about the life God had in mind for them and everyone was true;
And they had better get about living into this new reality by living it themselves
And by sharing it with others, which is exactly what the women did.

They fled from the tomb to tell Peter and the other followers of Jesus that their Lord was risen
And that a new reality, God's new reality had entered into the world;
And for nearly two thousand years they and others, like you and me,
Have been living in this new reality and showing and telling others
So that everyone may know the power and promise of Jesus' resurrection
And live no longer in the old reality of death and unforgiveness and fear;
But in the new reality of life and grace and hope and love and God with us, always.

Living in the Two Realities

Now, I suspect it helped these first followers that for the next fifty days or so
Jesus appeared to them and touched them and talked with them and ate with them
So that they could be sure that the new reality was true reality and not some dream.

And I would be the first to admit that I, like many of you,
Would have loved to touch His hands and feet to see the marks of His glory;
To share a piece of bread or fish and talk with Him – surely that would clench it
And imprint the new reality in our hearts and lives
In a way that would remove all doubt.

But you and I do know the truth of Jesus' resurrection in our own lives
In those moments when we feel comforted over the death of someone we love;
Or when we are forgiven or offered companionship we haven't earned.

We taste the fruit of this new reality made known by Jesus' resurrection
When the fears that grip our lives are loosened and hope springs up; in our hearts.

We catch glimpses of the new reality in this place, in this Christian community
Where strangers become close friends;
Where the good news of God's love is preached and practiced;
Where there is forgiveness and healing and hope;
And where, when someone passes through the door of death
The trumpet is sounded in the darkness

As we celebrate the life here and the life that is to come for all.

We experience this new reality when we use our time for others;

Expecting nothing in return;

We know this new reality when we are freed to exercise the gifts God has given us

To build up this community and to change the world around us

To change the world that is still bound by the old reality.

We know the new reality brought about by Jesus' resurrection when we offer ourselves

To feed the poor and fund ministries and schools and charities;

And others, outside of St. David's, can come to know the love and presence of God

In their lives.

We know this new reality

When we are willing to give our lives more and more to God's purposes;

And less and less for our purposes alone.

We know this new reality when we are in prayer all on our own;

And we are touched by the very presence of the Risen Christ.

There are signs all around us and when we invite God to give us eyes to see and hearts to know

The new reality that came into the world when Christ rose from the dead

Comes to us and we live no longer in the old reality

But in the new reality offered to us by the love of God in our lives.

So, on this Easter morning, when the signs of Jesus' resurrection and God's new reality

Are being heard in the scripture and in glorious music;

When the signs are being evidenced in the life and service of this community;

And experienced in your life and mine;

I invite you to open your heart to the promise of Jesus' resurrection

For the first time or in a renewed way this morning

Lift up your heart so that the new reality of God's power over death,
God's forgiveness and love can reign in your life more and more.

Let go of the old reality of death and unforgiveness and fear

And ask God to open the way to allow God's forgiveness, love, hope and faith

To work in your life

And then live into this new reality more and more and more;

For Christ is risen, Alleluia, The Lord is risen indeed. Praise be to God

Amen.