

Easter  
April 1, 2018  
\*CW-S – “In Christ Alone”

Matthew 28:5-6  
152-157-145-752\*-341

To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father – to Him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

“He Has Risen – JUST AS HE SAID!”

- I. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection.
- II. The comfort of Jesus’ resurrection.
- III. The promise of Jesus’ resurrection.

Dear Christian friends,

“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!’ So the early Christians would **greet each other** on Easter morning. That might sound corny to some people it does bring home the REAL MEANING and JOY of Easter so much more than a **simple** “Happy Easter” can do. “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” – that SAYS IT ALL and changes everything. A still dead and buried Jesus would mean we HAVE NOTHING – **no forgiveness** – **no peace** – **no comfort** – **no hope**. THANK God – “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”

That’s the truth the ANGEL SHARED with the women at Jesus’ grave **although he used** SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT words. **“He has risen, just as He said.”** SAVORING those words let’s look at 1)the fact, 2)the comfort and 3)the promise of Jesus’ resurrection.

#### I. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection.

**Good Friday** and Easter take us to the VERY HEART of our Christian **faith AND life**. We need both – Jesus both **crucified** and **risen**. A **Jesus** who EITHER didn’t die on the **cross to pay** for our sins OR a **Jesus** who is still dead and buried in some LONG-LOST grave in Israel – is a Jesus who DOES US NO GOOD. That’s a Jesus who is NO REAL SAVIOR. Thank God that BOTH TRUTHS are historical facts. The angel emphasized both when he told the women, **“I know you are looking for Jesus, who WAS crucified. He is not here. He has RISEN, just as He said.”**

SOME of these women had been out at Calvary and had personally witnessed Jesus’ death on the cross. With their OWN EYES they had seen the nails – the **“crown of thorns”** – the shreds the **scourging had made** of Jesus’ back – the gash in Jesus’ side from the **soldier’s spear**. They HAD WATCHED as Jesus’ battered and bloody body was **taken down** from His cross and then hastily buried in that **grave borrowed** from Joseph of Arimathea. These women had left early that Sunday morning – **“just after sunrise”** – to give Jesus’ corpse a PROPER burial. We’re not told if that **first Easter dawned** with BRIGHT SUNSHINE but it was all gloom and darkness in their hearts. They headed out to Jesus’ grave FULLY EXPECTING to find Jesus’ body COLD and **lifeless**. ALL of Jesus’ disciples were convinced that He was **dead and gone**. Good Friday had SO TRAUMATIZED them that they completely forgot Jesus’ repeated promise, **“On the third day I will be raised to life.”**

The women arrive at Jesus’ grave but NOTHING is **as they expected**. Jesus’ grave is standing wide open. Jesus’ dead body is NOWHERE to be found. God didn’t leave them SCRATCHING their heads **wondering what** was going on. God sent an angel to EXPLAIN Easter. Listen again to the words and let them SOAK IN in all their glory! **“I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, just as He said.”**

Jesus had been **“crucified.”** Jesus had died on His cross. Jesus soul had left His body and had returned to His Father in heaven. Jesus’ **dead body** had been placed in this VERY grace. The angel invites them to CHECK it out. He has a SIMPLE EXPLANATION as to why they **don’t see** Jesus’ dead

body. Jesus ISN'T DEAD **anymore!** Graves are for DEAD, DECAYING bodies and Jesus isn't dead anymore. Jesus' soul returned to His body – Jesus' body came back to life – Jesus came out of His grave ALIVE and **triumphant**. We don't have a DEAD Lord Jesus but a RISEN, LIVING Savior. It's not simply the SPIRIT – the LOVE – the MESSAGE of Jesus that lives on. JESUS HIMSELF lives! **“He has risen – JUST AS He said.”** “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

That is the FACT of Jesus' resurrection. Now let's look at...

## II. The comfort of Jesus' resurrection.

The first comfort of Jesus' resurrection is that we really are FORGIVEN. **“He (Jesus) was handed over because of our trespasses,”** Paul wrote. **“and was raised to life because of our justification.”** Or as he also wrote, **“If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins.”** BUT **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”** so we ARE NO LONGER **“in our sins”** – we're forgiven!

**Good Friday** and **Easter** are God's answer to OUR sin and guilt. Sin is NOT SIMPLY a mistake – a poor choice – **doing** something dumb. Sin is ignoring and disobeying God's CLEAR WILL. Sin is REBELLING against God's control over our lives – it's DEFYING our Creator with an **“I don't care what You say, God” attitude**. That's the attitude behind EVERY sin **no matter what** sin it is. “God, You're to be my TRUE LOVE – to always come first in my life? It's NOT GOING to happen, God! I'm to GLADLY hear and learn and live Your Word – to be all excited about coming to church? THINK AGAIN, God!” God didn't give us His commandments ASKING our opinion about them. God fully expects us to OBEY them. He will accept nothing less than PERFECT – FROM THE HEART obedience. ANYTHING LESS He promises to punish with death and hell's eternal banishment and punishment.

Taking God's commandments SERIOUSLY and PERSONALLY we gather at Jesus' cross and marvel at God's GRACE. **“God made Him (Jesus), who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** God **“did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all.”** Jesus gives us all the credit for His perfect life. Jesus willingly took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. Jesus endured the hell we had coming. Jesus died the death that FULLY PAID for **all** our sins. **“It is finished!”** Jesus had shouted triumphantly from His cross. Every commandment PERFECTLY obeyed. Every single sin of **every single person** PERSONALLY paid by God's own Son on the cross. And NOW – **“He has risen – just as He said.”** Clinging to Jesus we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE of God's love and forgiveness FULL and free.

Another comfort of Jesus' resurrection is God's FAITHFULNESS. **“He has risen, JUST AS He said.”** Jesus had repeatedly promised to rise from the dead **“on the third day.”** But **the women** and the **other disciples** FORGOT Jesus' promise and so they had NO **comfort** – peace – joy – hope. They were devastated by Jesus' death and could ONLY SEE Jesus' **dead body**. They were walking BY SIGHT and not by a faith that CLINGS to God's promises.

THEY forgot - but NOT JESUS! **“He has risen – just as He said.”** Easter is the ultimate proof that God ALWAYS keeps His promises. God may take His **time** as we see it. He may lead us on some paths WE'D RATHER **avoid**. He may use ways WE'D NEVER THINK of. But God always knows what He's doing and He always comes through on His promises – ALL of them! Jesus' resurrection proves that we can CONFIDENTLY TRUST God's promises – **no matter how unbelievable** they might sound.

A third comfort of Easter is God's ALMIGHTY power. Unbelievers see Easter as **nothing more** than an APRIL FOOL'S JOKE. Dead people don't come back to life. That's ridiculous. DEAD is **dead** – gone for good. But Easter PROVES that **“nothing is impossible with God.”** NOTHING CAN STOP God from carrying out His **plans** or fulfilling His **promises** - not even death itself!

Oh rejoice in that **comfort!** Life **sometimes so cruelly remind** us that WE'RE NOT **in charge** – we don't have all the **answers** – we can't fix every problem. WE'RE NOT GOD – but Jesus is! **Death**

could not defeat the **“Lord of life.”** The grave could not contain Him who **“is the Resurrection and the Life.”** We are safe in the LOVING and ALMIGHTY hands of our risen, living Savior.

### III. The promise of Jesus’ resurrection.

It’s really part of the **comfort** of Easter but I want to emphasize it. JESUS’ resurrection is the promise of **our own** resurrections on the Last Day. **“Because I live,”** Jesus promises us, **“you shall live also.”**

The **older I get** Easter takes on more and more MEANING – it’s THE SOURCE of **more and more comfort** and **joy** – peace and **anticipation**. See, there’s **more and more family** and friends and loved ones death has taken out of my life. You know what I’m talking about. Seeing their pictures – retelling the stories – brings back special and PRECIOUS MEMORIES. But we need more than **pictures** and **flowers** and **memories** to REALLY comfort us and dry our tears. Thank God – we HAVE Easter! Christ is risen – He is risen indeed – **“JUST AS He said!”**

As Christians we have DOUBLE COMFORT in the **face of death** – the deaths of **Christian** loved ones or facing up to **our own** coming death. **When** the CHRISTIAN DIES his soul is immediately with Jesus in heaven. Our comfort is NOT JUST that they’re no longer suffering or **whatever**. Our real comfort is that they are **now** SAFELY HOME with Jesus. Even as we bury their bodies – as we put flowers on their graves – we know that while their BODIES are in those graves our loved ones are REALLY IN HEAVEN – **“God having wiped ever tear from their eyes.”** While we may miss them **dearly** we certainly wouldn’t want them to HAVE TO LEAVE heaven and **come back** here. We can’t wait till we CAN JOIN them **at Jesus’ side** in heaven – NEVER to be parted again.

You can’t top that for **real comfort** but God doesn’t stop there. We also have **God’s promise** of “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.” **On the Last Day** Jesus will return in all His glory and raise all the dead back to life. We Christians – OUR BODIES will be raised **“immortal, imperishable, transformed to be like Christ’s glorious body.”** Then glorified body and soul we will live forever with our Savior God in that **“new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”** **“AND SO we will be with the Lord forever.”** So God has PROMISED us. So God COMFORTS us now.

If all that sounds TOO GOOD to be true take another look at Jesus’ empty grave – listen again to those PRICELESS words, **“He is not here. He has risen, just as He said!”** Christ is risen! He is risen INDEED! Amen.

Explanation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Article (in bulletin)