

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:2-5)

His Resurrection – PRAYERS ANSWERED!

(conclusion of series: *the Passionate Prayers of Our Savior*)

PRAY: Let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

To basketball enthusiasts, this time of year is known as March Madness. Teams around the country are engaging in down to the wire tournament action as they all strive to be #1. The competition is filled with dominating victories and devastating defeats. They all seek the trophy. But the trophy goes only to one.

Jesus is the lowest seed, the most unlikely. He is, to the world, the one who “hasn’t got a prayer.” We hear this as He hangs on the cross. *And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.” (Luke 23:35)*

The path to God’s victory is completely contrary to the March Madness of this world. No one predicted this upset. We look around and sin seems to dominate. Everyone is trying to scratch their way to the top, to be #1. And the Chosen One, God’s beloved, hangs, helpless in death.

Throughout our midweek services we have been considering the “Passionate Prayers of our Savior.” On Friday we considered the last prayer of Jesus: *“Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46).*

Jesus prayed the confidence of Psalm 16: *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Sheol nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

The resurrection is the answer to Jesus prayer. In a sense, He “throws up a prayer ... and it is good.” He commits His soul to God on Friday and receives the answer on Sunday. The trophy can only go to One, and it only goes to Jesus. He has become the chief cornerstone of our salvation. On Him we build and in His glory we share.

The resurrection of Jesus declares the Madness over. It declares victory over sin, death, Satan, and our flesh. It is the answer to every one of our prayers.

Luke 24:36–53 (NKJV)

- 36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."*
- 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.*
- 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"*
- 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."*
- 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.*
- 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"*
- 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.*
- 43 And He took it and ate in their presence.*
- 44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."*
- 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*
- 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,*
- 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*
- 48 And you are witnesses of these things.*
- 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*
- 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.*
- 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*
- 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,*
- 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Maybe you've known the agony defeat. There is little peace in it. Sometimes we get so caught up in the competition that we go home churning inside, unable to sleep, stunned by the loss. This perhaps gives us a sense of what the disciples were facing: defeat – or so they supposed. Their beloved Master, the promised One who had come to restore all things, to bring them liberation, was dead. And now, as His followers, their own lives hang in the balance. They hide behind closed doors.

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."

Peace? We doubt it. How can this be? **38 And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?** For the disciples, they still were struggling to understand how all these things fit together. No matter how many times Jesus foretold these things, the disciples were not able to apply it to their current situation.

Many of the same doubts arise in our hearts. How often do we find ourselves knowing the facts, but struggling to put it all together. We know that Jesus died and rose from the dead – but we don’t see how this is the answer to our prayers ... how does this help me pay the bills? ... how does this help marriage struggles? ... how does this help my father who has cancer? Our insides churn with uncertainty.

Our future, our family, our faith come into doubt at one time or another in our lives. And at such times our eyes deceive us. Around us and even within our flesh there is anything but peace. The world tells you to “scratch your way to the top.” But the truth is, we face a score against us that is insurmountable. All our empty labor just cannot give us true peace. Where is the answer to our prayers?

44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

We sometimes refer to Scripture as being “Christo-centric.” The Spirit’s work draws all Scripture into Christ and Christ into all Scripture. All that God would have us know for our salvation centers in Christ’s work in the flesh.

It is this Christo-centric thinking that opens our understanding. He alone is the key to knowing this peace which God gives. Yes, we can read the Bible. Yes, we can know the facts; we can get all the questions right on the exam; but only the Spirit of Christ in us can reveal how the answers our prayers is found in the death and resurrection of Christ.

This is the message of the prophets – *He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; (Isaiah 25:7–8)*

This is the words of the psalmist – *You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16:10).*

This is the promise of Abraham: *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 22:18).* And that Seed is Christ and one of those nations is us.

The resurrection is the inauguration of Christ’s kingdom of peace, the central teaching in understanding all that God has accomplished.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then we truly are throwing up prayers that will never be heard. If His body remains in the grave, then all is lost. There is no victory,

and the Madness of death reigns. You can see all around you how our own reasoning is truly Madness; we see a world lost in uncertainty; we see courts and government, protesters and lawyers stumbling in a haze of arguments over rights and freedom and morals.

But madness does not rule God's kingdom. The peace which Jesus gives in His resurrection is not earthly. It cannot be gained by courts, or laws, or protests. Jesus Himself said: *Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. (Luke 12:51)* This is a peace which is hidden from the world as it was from the Pharisees and scribes. So Jesus said as He journeyed into Jerusalem, *"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. (Luke 19:42)*

God's kingdom is Christo-centric, opening our understanding to a peace which is only seen by faith in His death and resurrection.

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The resurrection ushers in a heavenly peace – *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)* This is a divine reign which captivates hearts and minds. This is a kingdom which comes in the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins and the hope of everlasting life.

The Greek word for "preach" emphasizes a public declaration – "to proclaim as a herald." Here Jesus stands in our midst, in the public assembly where repentance and forgiveness are heralded. Don't think "our pews and the pastor's pulpit;" ... rather, think "God's people and Christ's promise."

In verse 49 Jesus gives the "promise of the Father." Christ has handed down His heavenly authority to His Church. This power is the power of the kingdom. It is an authority to carry on Christ's Word; to proclaim His resurrection; to preach divine peace; to forgive sins. This is the peace of God.

As Jesus stand in their midst, so also Jesus stands in our midst. The body of Christ is as alive today as it was 2000 years ago. Daily we face the madness of our sins, we are confused by a confused world. And so week by week Christ continues to declare His triumph, over sin and death; His triumph in His cross; His triumph in His glorified and ever present body. "Why are you troubled?"

As you are struggling day by day to live up to God's will ... as you slip, stumble, and show your weakness ... as you doubt ... as you are burdened with sickness and death ... as you just can't understand the confusion of this world and the curse that closes in –

God's peace remains unchanged; See it with your ears in the words of Jesus – "Peace to you." *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1)*

This is the peace which Job confessed. When there were no earthly trophies, when it seemed all had been stripped away from him, when the March Madness of this world pressed upon him, he confessed – *For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, (Job 19:25–26)*

Our prayers are answered not in this dying world, but in our living Redeemer.

How does this help me pay my bills? How does this solve marriage difficulties? How does this help my father who has cancer?

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:34–39).

Your prayers are answered by faith; by the confidence God gives in the peace and promise of your own resurrection. Think of Jesus' resurrection as God's divine stamp on the certificate of salvation – proving it valid; declaring you righteous and answering your every prayer. As hymn 149 says:

*God is faithful; God will never break His covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died, sealed when He was glorified."*

Luke's Gospel ends an eternal note ...

52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

It is as if you can hear the praises of those early Christians continue to echo among us in our worship today.

There is no other place to share your sins, to share your struggles, than among fellow believers. There is no other place to receive peace of mind and soul than here where God's Word dwells. *And let the peace of God rule among your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:15–16)*

The praise we give has nothing to do with the Madness we see around us. In fact, we triumph right in the Midst of the Madness. We are willing to be the lowest seed. We submit to the world's persecution and disdain. We commit our body and soul to the hands of our Father, because we know He answers our prayer whether we see it or not. We know, as we read earlier, "we shall be changed." "This corruption shall put on incorruption." "This mortal shall put on immortality." "There is no sting in the death that awaits us." "Because He lives, we too shall live." "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

The confidence of Psalm 16 has become ours: *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Sheol not will You allow Your holy one to see corruption.*

It is certain! AMEN!