

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!

There is something uniquely powerful about early mornings. Think of those rare mornings when the air is cool, the sky is golden, and the world seems brand new. That's how the first Easter began—not with trumpets or fanfare, but with a quiet, expectant walk to a tomb.

In Matthew 28, we hear of the women—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary—going to Jesus' tomb. Their hearts are heavy. Only days ago they saw Jesus, the One they followed and loved, nailed to a cross and laid in a grave. Their world had ended. But when they arrive, an angel declares, "He is not here, for He has risen, as He said." And shortly after, Jesus Himself meets them and says, "Do not be afraid."

Easter begins not with celebration, but with surprise—and then overwhelming joy. And it changes everything. Death is no longer the final word. Sin no longer holds us captive. Satan no longer accuses with power. Because Christ is risen.

Let's be honest. Death is not a distant thought for most of us. Some have recently stood by hospital beds. Others have walked through the grief of losing a parent, a spouse, or a friend. You may feel the weight of aging in your own body. These are not imagined fears. They're part of life in a fallen world.

And death is not just a natural part of life—it's the consequence of sin. As Scripture tells us, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Our wrong words, our self-centered decisions, the sharp retorts, the quiet resentments—these all testify that we fall short of the glory of God. His Law shows us that we cannot save ourselves. No amount of kindness or effort removes sin's stain. It leads to separation from God.

But praise be to God—that's not where the story ends.

Easter declares: "He is not here. He is risen!" Jesus has conquered the grave. The punishment for sin—death—has been paid in full. "He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). The empty tomb is God's loud "Yes!" to everything Jesus did. His resurrection is the seal that our sins are forgiven, that His sacrifice was accepted, and that life—not death—has the final word.

Think of how a debt collector calls until the balance is paid. Then one day you receive a letter: "Paid in full. You owe nothing." The resurrection is that letter for your soul. Jesus paid what

you owed. He bore the wrath. He died the death. Now, because He lives, your account is cleared forever. You are forgiven.

A Christian hospice chaplain recently shared a story about a woman named Evelyn. She was in her late seventies, diagnosed with a terminal illness. When he first met her, she was afraid—not just of pain, but of what came next. She confessed regrets—words she couldn't take back, years of distance in her family, doubts about her faith. But she also held on to the hope of Christ's resurrection.

During one visit, the chaplain read from today's Gospel: "He is not here; He has risen." Evelyn smiled and said, "Then I don't need to be afraid." Her circumstances didn't change, but her heart did. She died a week later, not in fear, but in peace—trusting the One who defeated death.

That's the hope Easter gives. Not a denial of reality, but a promise that in Christ, death is not the end. "Because I live," Jesus says, "you also will live" (John 14:19).

So what does this resurrection mean for us today?

First, it means your sins are forgiven. Truly. Not metaphorically or hypothetically—but completely. Every angry word, every cold silence, every failure you wish you could undo—Jesus took it all to the cross. His resurrection is God's declaration that "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Second, Easter gives you hope beyond the grave. Jesus' resurrection is not just proof of His power—it's the promise of your own resurrection. As Paul writes, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). In Him, you will rise. Your body, weak and worn as it may be now, will be raised new, incorruptible, and glorious.

Third, Easter means you have a message to share. The women at the tomb didn't keep it to themselves—they ran to tell the disciples. That's our calling, too. We don't need to have perfect words. We simply share the joy of knowing Jesus is alive. Maybe you know someone—an old friend, a relative—who's overwhelmed by life. This week, pick up the phone. Tell them, "Christ is risen. And because He lives, there's hope."

There's a gardener in our community named Paul. He's in his sixties now and struggles with arthritis, but every spring he's out planting anyway. A few years ago, he planted daffodils in a neglected churchyard. That first year, not much came up. But by the second spring, yellow flowers pushed through. "They come back," he said, "because life always finds a way."

That's a small but beautiful picture of resurrection. Even where there's sorrow, life breaks in. Jesus' resurrection is not just about the future—it brings new life now. It gives courage to the grieving, strength to the weary, and joy to those weighed down by sin.

So, dear brothers and sisters, on this glorious Easter morning, we join our voices with the Church of every age and every place: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

This is not a metaphor or myth. It is history. It is Gospel. It is your hope.

Jesus lives. Your sins are forgiven. Death is defeated. And eternal life is yours in Him.

So go forward in faith. Trust His promise. Live in joy. And speak the good news: He is risen—He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Amen.

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