

He Is Risen Indeed!

For years I've loved and been caught by the account in **Mark 2:1-12** where Jesus forgives and heals the paralytic.

Many of us know the story...

[I'll tell the story:

Jesus came to town – and everyone flocked to him... Some men came carrying a paralyzed man... "Son, your sins are forgiven."

"Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say, 'your sins are forgiven.' Or 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?...]

I've often thought about this man and this story – and the **question** that must have lingered with him, **baffled** him, for years.

How did Jesus forgive his sins?

As a Jew, he would have known, as did everyone present that day, that *forgiveness required atonement*. If he was to be forgiven, there needed to be a sacrifice, an offering, **atonement**...

But Jesus had **not** sent him to the temple to offer anything. He simply **declared** his sins **forgiven**... **How could Jesus do this?**

He must have often wondered about this?

And when did he finally find out? Did he hear the news – 3 years later – about Jesus' death and resurrection and the meaning of it all, or did he simply understand when he was raised to new life in the new heavens and the new earths?

I don't know. But what I do know is that, somehow, in the mystery of God's grace, Jesus' death and resurrection, which didn't

actually take place for a few more years, somehow **reached back**, over the years, **to that moment** and brought this man forgiveness and healing and new life...

And I know it happened – not just because the gospels are reliable historical documents – but **because it happened to ME**, and to **many of us – many of YOU**, as it has to countless women and men throughout history... **and continues to...**

This is the beauty and mystery of the gospel.

On one particular historic Friday – some 2000 years ago – **Jesus died on a cross**. *He was arrested, tortured and crucified - like a criminal...*

And **on the third day** – one particular historic Sunday morning – **Jesus was raised** from the dead... **Resurrected**... Some 2000 years ago.

And yet, somehow, in the sovereign mystery of God's grace, what God did on that particular weekend in history **transcends** time and history and **reaches** across the centuries and years – and gives life to all who bow to Christ...

This is what happened to the paralytic – in Mark 2.

This is what happened to the **apostle Paul**. This is what happened to man named **Augustine** in Milan in the 4th C... And to **John Wesley** in England in the 18th century... And to so many of **us**...

And it keeps happening... and it will **keep** happening...

Because, as we've already said a number of times this morning:

He IS Risen.

This is our confession and hope.

That **Jesus IS Risen.**

Not just that "He **was** risen" or "raised".

But "He **IS** Risen!"... He **is**.

This is the beating heart of the Christian faith: that Jesus Christ **IS** Risen, Alive, and Lord – **today**. Not just **once was**, but **IS today... HE IS RISEN**, and because of this, **He continues** to be at work – showing up in human history, making Himself known and to drawing women and men to **a living faith** – restoring us to life with God, through Jesus, by the Spirit...

This is what happened, centuries ago, to a Pharisee named **Saul of Tarsus...**

*He wasn't at the cross. He wasn't at the empty tomb. But Jesus – the Risen One – in the coming days – came to Him and brought the gospel to bear in His life – and Saul became *Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.**

But it didn't just happen to Paul. It's a story that continues to happen...

- In 389 AD, a man named **Aurelius Augustinus** – **encountered Jesus.**

- Born in North Africa to a pagan father and a Christian mother – Augustine grew up trying anything and everything – whether new ways of thought, religion, diets or experiences. At age 18, he took a concubine – who lived with him for the next 15 years.
 - In his memoir, he would reflect back on this season of his life as searching and finding no satisfaction. His soul was turning in on itself. He would ultimately regard himself as a sex addict. In all his pursuits, he was running from God.
 - Eventually, Augustine took a prestigious job as a professor of rhetoric in Milan, Italy. There he began to sit under the preaching of the Ambrose, the bishop of Milan.
 - But one day, as he sat in a garden, he heard a child in a neighboring yard shouting two words that he thought were part of a game – *tolle lege* (latin for "take and read"). It triggered something in his mind. He picked up a copy of the New Testament that was lying on a nearby table and it opened to **Romans 13:14** – and he read these words – "*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*" And in those words, he knew that God was speaking to him.
 - He did exactly what the text said. He trusted in Christ. And in this moment, he knew the grace of God had changed him. The old way of life was now gone. He found the rest in God for which he then knew he had been created. From then on, he would be a devoted servant of Jesus Christ – and his thoughts and writing would shape the course of Christian theology for centuries to come.
- **Say it with me: He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!**
- In 1654, **Blaise Pascal** – the great French mathematician, physicist, and philosopher – **encountered Jesus...**
 - **p.572** – Hear his testimony in his own words... (found as a written item sewn into the lining of his coat – after he died.)

▪ **Say it with me: He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!**

But it's not just stories famous people to be found in books. This story has been written into many of our lives...
 - In 1945, **Hans Andriessen** – encountered Jesus.

Born in 1933, in the Netherlands, Hans was raised in an atheist home and experienced his childhood in Europe in the harrowing days of the Second World War.

The year after the war, he and his siblings, like many children, was sent to neighboring Sweden to be cared for, while his parents sought to rebuild life.

*There in Sweden, Hans and his siblings experienced the compassion and care they so desperately needed, and Hans encountered the beauty of Christ in a Swedish Christian named **Esther Patterson**. She was the first to introduce Hans to the gospel.*

The following year, when he returned to the Netherlands and his atheist family home – his faith slipped from the forefront.

But years later, upon adulthood, Hans made the long journey to Canada, settling in Altona, Manitoba and took a job at the local radio station – CFAM – which included working the Sunday shift – playing only Christian programming. Hans heard the gospel again and again.

Through the ministry of the local Mennonite Church and a televised Billy Graham Crusade, Hans came to put his trust in Jesus as his Lord and Saviour – and has followed Jesus now for a lifetime.

- **He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!**

2. Simon Prittie

Growing up in a non-Christian family, I did not know Jesus – but I always felt like there was something missing in my life, and I could never place my finger on it...

I felt an inadequacy about my life... I felt like I was constantly searching for value (in the eyes of other people) about myself, to validate myself, to validate my existence...

And I found myself just drifting through life hoping to feel connection with people and friends and family and yet, never being fully satisfied... and not really understanding why... thinking maybe there was something wrong with me or something deeper that I just couldn't understand.

But when I was 17 and I heard for the first time that there was a God, that through His son Jesus Christ, gave everything so that I could have a relationship with Him... I found myself at first, wondering, "Is this it?" ... "Is this that missing piece?" ... "is this that whole in my heart that needs to be filled?"

*And the beautiful thing was that, God wasn't saying, "There's a whole in your heart that needs to be filled by me, but there's someone missing from **our** family that needs to be filled by **you!**"*

And for the first time in my life, I felt like I was a part of the thing I was always meant to be a part of but just didn't know it.

And I saw God's hand of grace and guidance (in hindsight) scattered throughout my entire life as I looked at the people who God put in my life to lead me to the place where I was... at 17 years old, where my eyes could finally be opened and I could finally see that there's a God who loves me and wants me to be in His family.

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3. Carlie Kilduff

I used to think of Jesus as a storybook character. It is no surprise that this left me confused, disconnected, and roaming in and out of church in the past. As a few traumatic events occurred for me, each time my only response was: God. Go to church.

Four years ago, when my family moved to Gordon Head, experiencing grief from the move, I was drawn again to church. This church. Soon after our arrival to Lambrick, I found myself in the middle of a significant mess, of my own making, on track to some very serious consequences. Knowing, once again, that God was my only answer, I cried out to Jesus, deciding to believe that he was more than a storybook character. I was unsure how to have a relationship with him but he came to me right away and very quickly began to change me and my circumstances.

The results have far surpassed my greatest hopes. I could say more about the effect of Jesus on my heart and life but this much I can assure you: Jesus is NOT a storybook character. He is REAL, ALIVE, RISEN, GOOD, and AVAILABLE to all who choose him. He broke into my story in 2016 and gave me new life. Life more abundant and beautiful than any dream I've ever pondered.

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4. Louis Chen

I grew up in a family and world with no concept of religion, church, God, and Christianity.

Indifference to anything related to religion and ignorance to Christianity combined to forge an improbable gap for me to reach God. Not to mention being a 16 year old, being part of a sports team or popular school crowd was of far greater importance than to reach out for a divine god.

Then on a typical Sunday when I was supposed to be watching basketball on TV and gathering player stats to impress friends the next day, I accepted an invitation to attend a church. I declined a ride to the church anticipating that I'd change my mind. I didn't.

I can't explain why I went. I don't remember the sermon or the songs that were sung that day. That 90-minute service felt very long and uncomfortably strange. I left as soon as I could only to enter into what can only be described as the presence of the Holy Spirit. I felt a sense of peace that I had never experienced before. I was so captured by that moment that I drove home as slow as I could, fearing that if I get out of the car, that overwhelming sense of peace would be lost. When I eventually reached home, I phoned a friend who had mentioned church to me before, and that phone call began what has now been a 27 year journey with Jesus.

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5. Gerry Brouwer

I have faint early childhood memories of visiting Sunday School and hearing the stories of Noah and the Ark, Moses parting the Red Sea and David defeating Goliath. But those stories had little more value or importance than the many fables and legends I also heard about. They were just cool stories.

Our home did not regularly go to church when I was growing up, but through those years my younger brother then my youngest brother both became Christians. My response to them through that time was "it's nice they have that crutch to lean on."

When I was 24, I got married and carried on with my own "dependent on no one" attitude. 7 years later my life was in crisis as my wife had left our marriage for another.

It was at that time of deepest despair that my brother had given me a Christian book about marriage relationships and I thought that the author must have been watching me my whole life as he painted the situations and struggles I had been facing. He wrote what the typical male reaction would be.... and I heard myself saying "YES! that's how I would react!" Then he wrote what God's response would be for situation after situation a completely different way in dealing with relationships.

*After finishing the book I knew I needed to respond in a completely different way.... not only towards my wife, but **from being dependent on no one to being utterly dependent on God.** That is when I surrendered my life to Jesus.*

Despite my best efforts to resuscitate my marriage, it did still end. That journey remains as the most horrendous and regretful times I have ever experienced.....

BUT! It also began a journey with a Savior that became so precious to me.

In short order, God gave me a new family in the body of Christ – to this this day I have such tremendous gratitude to those who had invested of their time and love and kept pointing me to Jesus.

5 years later, God granted me the opportunity to be a husband again and last month Wendy and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. I thank God daily for His grace to me in Christ.

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6. Rhian Williams

I was not raised in a Christian household.

I never had any real strong Christian influences as I grew up.

In my teens, my parents were divorced and a good friend of mine passed away.

In the wake of this, when I was 15, a school friend encouraged me to join her at Soul Survivor - a week long summer camp that encouraged young Christians in their faith. I had no idea was I was getting into – but God met me there, I gave my life to Christ and was baptized two years later.

And God continues to work in and around me - revealing himself to me through people, no matter where in the world I am - including right here in this church. God is always with me and that is something that I can take great comfort in that.

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7. Kyle Griffieon

Though Jesus has always been a part of my life, he wasn't always the focus. My parents are wonderful Christian people and raised me in the church. I was told how much He loves and cares for us, but had never really felt him with me in my day to day life....

At a certain point, I opted out and tried to distance myself from it all.

Until this last year.

Though I had stopped looking for him, he never stopped looking for me. That was made crystal clear to me in one sentence from a cherished cousin.

"I'll be praying for you."

He invited me to read the Bible with Him – and prayed for me regularly – and I knew I needed it. As I read the Bible and leaned in to Christian community, God exploded into my life showing up seemingly everywhere I turn!

My home, my crazy roommates, student programs like UCM at UVic, and even through coworkers and interactions in the workplace. I'm so thankful for who the Lord has shown himself to be, and how He has transformed my life, and the countless gifts

He has blessed me with! I don't know where I'd be without Him, and I can't wait for when I'll see him next!

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8. Deb Morris

My personal journey before Christ entered my life was long. It was a wild life of adventure, rebelliousness, curiosity, unfortunate abuses of my person, and regrettable decisions. Life was tough, and I compensated for a deep sense of confusion and emptiness by controlling my outer life with material garb (driving a Mercedes, wearing power suits, unhealthy alliances with men). I was a full-grown woman of 39-years with a four-year old son and I was struggling. I looked great on the outside, but I was in deep emotional pain and I was frantic to find something significant. I had years of spiritual seeking through Buddhism, Lakota First Nations medicine-walk, and lots of new age jizzle-jazzle. Finally, I gave up on all this and began praying for the TRUTH. I knew I was lost and I was going from one poor choice to the next.

And then a woman invited me for tea and she said "I couldn't live without Jesus in my life". I thought to myself "oh great!! Just what I need, a Jesus freak". I asked her the name of the church, said I might try it, finished my tea and ran out the door. A couple weeks later I walked through the doors of LPC, and my world has never been the same. I didn't even know I was searching for Jesus. I didn't know there was a life of forgiveness, grace and mercy waiting for everyone, even me. But I did know I was dead. After several years attending church regularly (at least once a month), an Alpha course, and some very kind people who quoted scripture in my hungry ears, I met Jesus, and was baptized in 1997. There is an inner knowing of a living Christ in me that is unshakeable, not because my life became perfect, but because I am alive with Him in a dance of transformation and abiding love. I did nothing to deserve this grace and continue to be awestruck by His real redemptive presence in this world.

- **He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!**

And then **Scott Anderson.**

"I grew up in the church – knowing all about and believing in Jesus. He was as basic as sleep and food for me... much because of the faith of my parents, and that is a gift I'll always be thankful for...

*But when I was 16, I came home from a summer at camp **different** - I came home alive - **spiritually alive** - you could see it in my eyes and hear it from my lips - I had joy and hope and passion and faith - deep confidence that Jesus was alive and real and at work in my life.*

Cause that summer, in and through the shock of a close friend's tragic death, I, along with a number of my friends, encountered and experienced Jesus in so many ways... Giving us strength to love for our campers, speaking to us through scripture, holding us together, and showing up through us to our campers - and in the process, showing up for and to us... And I came home different - full of faith - gripped with the awareness that Jesus was and is alive and at work in me... and others could see it..."

- **Say it with me: He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!**

This is what we celebrate today – and everyday...

This is the anchor, the epicenter and the fountain of our confession and faith!

That Jesus Christ was real...?

No...

That Jesus actually lived & walked this earth 2000 years ago?

No...

That Jesus Christ loved us...?

No...

That Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and for the sins of the world...?

No! That alone isn't enough – because unless He's ALIVE today his atoning death and resurrected life can't reach us!

No. The essence of our confession and faith... And the reason for our hope and joy is this – that **Jesus Christ is Lord**. That He *is Risen – alive and Lord today – revealing, forgiving, seeking, saving, restoring, renewing and reconciling – all things to Himself.*

Without this, all the rest is meaningless and useless to us.

But **because of this**, Jesus' life and death and resurrection means **life** for us – for all who bow to Christ...

Romans 10:9 – *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.**"*

So let us do exactly this today – and tomorrow and the next day
– but especially on this **Resurrection Sunday** - with joy...

Let us confess with our mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord, and let us **believe and embrace and rejoice** in our hearts that God raised him from the dead – that we might be raised with Him... and live...

Let's worship...

And as we worship, let us come and bring our flowers to the cross – to turn this symbol of death into a Celebration of LIFE.

Maybe for some of you today – **this is all new – or you are experiencing this day in a new way – because right here and now – Jesus is awakening you to Himself and to the gospel** – that His Death on the cross was for your sins and His Resurrected Life can mean life for you – in Him.

If that is you today, come to the cross with us today and put your flower in the cross – but in this, with this, **give your life to Christ today and come follow Jesus with us.**

Romans 10:9 – "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.**"

HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!