

LIVE EVERY DAY LIKE IT'S EASTER

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, April 8, 2018

I'm glad to see that you survived Holy Week and Easter Sunday! A lot of Christians, and some pastors, do not. There is a well-known, but alarming attrition that usually follows Easter Sunday—about one-third of the Easter Sunday crowd are not in church the following weekend. That fact got me thinking this week...

We proclaim that Jesus is alive, right? And not just on one Sunday a year, right? Easter was when He rose, when it all began. But the Bible plainly says, "*We know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him*" (Romans 6:9; NLT).

Well, what if we actually lived like He was alive *every day*? What would that look like? What difference could that make?

What difference does it make that Jesus is alive today?

Here are five things that come to my mind:

- It assures me that the cross was/is effective.
- It assures me that His other words and promises are dependable.
- He prays for me continually.
- It assures me that I will live forever also.
- It assures me that He will come again.

Effective

The resurrection is not a stand-alone miracle; it is integrally related to Christ's death on the cross. Of course, if He had not died, then He could not be raised to life. But I'm thinking of something more, but something less obvious than that.

Since the death of Jesus had a divine purpose—to pay the debt of a world of sinning people, who had no way to escape their darkness and doom on their own—His resurrection from the dead demonstrated that God accepted His substitution. His resurrection validated His mission.

The cross was effective *because of* the resurrection.

Dependable

Jesus had told His disciples repeatedly that He was to be killed and then would rise again. And He added, specifically, “on the third day;” that is, three days after His death. I imagine that many people have suggested they would come back to life after they had died (if only to torment their enemies and their ex-spouses), but to specify when (and then pull it off!)—the number drops to exactly ONE.

This fact suggests that all the other seemingly crazy things Jesus predicted and promised are also likely. It renders all of His teachings—about God and His Kingdom and your future—patiently believable and dependable.

Interceding

“Therefore, He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf” (Hebrews 7:25; NLT).

Jesus referred to Himself as our Advocate and our Defender, using a legal term to indicate the nature of His intercessions for us. Standing on the side of the broken, weary sinner, the Risen Christ represents us before the throne of God, pleading His victorious sacrifice for our sinful souls.

He prays for us, as He taught us also to pray for ourselves, *“Don’t turn them over to temptation, but deliver them from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:13; NLT). So, you’re never alone or without strength when facing temptation. Jesus is with you and His strength will be yours, if only you will ask for it.

Forever

“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you” (Romans 8:11; NLT).

“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,” we have sung. Our resurrection is founded in His. And because He will never die again, we will never die again after He raises us up.

Eternal life is a present reality, because it is a *qualitative* condition, not merely a *quantitative* measure. Eternal does not just mean “never-ending.” It also means “heavenly.” We have been born again to a taste of Heaven (still to come).

And when Jesus comes again, this foretaste will become full and everlasting also.

Return

One of the key promises that Jesus made, that is assured by His resurrection, is that He will be back.

“Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too” (John 14:1-3; NET).

You will not be forgotten. Your faith will not be ignored. Your sacrifices will not be overlooked. Your hope will not be disappointed.

Jesus is coming again!

What does it mean to personally know the Risen Savior?

- It’s all about relationship.
- He is a Friend that sticks closer than a natural relative.
- “He walks with me, and He talks with me, along life’s narrow way.”
- He is the God of the living and the dead.
- My life is “bigger than life” also.

Relationship

Relationship with God—our Creator and Redeemer—is what separates Christianity from every other religion in the world. The social ethics are pretty much the same. Those that recognize a God-figure describe many similar attributes.

Only Christianity offers a close and enduring relationship with the One who made us, and promises a relationship full of merciful goodness and unconditional love.

Friendship

Surprisingly, Jesus offers us not only relationship as sons, instead of slaves, but also of friendship, instead of mere association.

“I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me” (John 15:15; NLT).

Good friends hold nothing back from each other. Jesus will keep you “in the loop,” as long as you show up for His briefings (prayer).

Companionship

The chorus of a familiar old hymn says, “And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joys we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known.”

You’ll hear us refer often to “the presence of the Lord.” That’s a reality of the Risen Savior that is frequently recognizable, often tangible. And it’s not a frightening thing; rather, it is uplifting, encouraging.

Many Christians have learned to take time to “soak” in God’s presence (spending extended time contemplating His greatness and goodness), in order to become more aware of His presence and more assured of His kindness. In fact, He has beckoned us to such a fellowship (Song of Solomon 2:14; NKJV): *“O my dove... let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”*

Big Life

He is the God of the living and of the dead. He is the Lord of life and of death. Therefore, if you know Him—His heart toward us—what have you to fear?

He is bigger than your life, and He is bigger than life itself. In fact, life proceeds from Him. *“All things were created by Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created”* (John 1:3; NET).

So, if you have surrendered your all to Him, you can rest in the knowledge that He has your life well in hand. Come what may, His heart toward you remains unchanged, and His plans for you will endure. Into, and throughout, eternity.

Significance

As a result, your own life here on earth is bigger than you can imagine. Your influence reaches farther than you could ever trace. Whether you are a stay-at-home mom, or a bleeding-edge scientist, the influence of your faith in Jesus Christ is enormous. So much so that He refers to you as *“more than a conqueror.”*

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39; NIV).

Your life with Christ is an adventure to be undertaken with courage and confidence. Regardless of how it may, at times, appear (to others, and even to you), it is a masterful work of Almighty God upon the earth. Don't abandon the course!

What is “resurrection life” and how does it operate in us?

- *“As those who are alive from the dead.”*
- Resurrection life is the God-connected life of miracles.
- It's not automatic; it's a life of active faith.

Alive

Jesus said, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life,”* (John 11:25; NLT) *before* He died. Now, we have been told to live *“as those who are alive from the dead”* (Romans 6:13; NET).

If you had physically died, and then be raised to life again, how would that change your perspective? How would that change your priorities?

And if your resurrection meant that death no longer had power over you, how would that change your fears?

A fearless perspective, with new, bold priorities—that is what it means to live *“as those who are alive from the dead.”*

God-Connected

Resurrection life is the life of Jesus—not just the compassionate Savior, but also the Risen King—in you! It is your connection to the Living God. It is His life, working in you and through you. This is how miracles occur in our lives—when we pray for them, and even when we do not.

Therefore, Paul prayed: *“I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. **This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms**”* (Ephesians 1:16-20; NLT).

Same power! Working for you.

Active Faith

However, resurrection life does not function automatically in any of our lives. You could be a Christian whose relationship with God is distant, not close like a friend. You could be a Christian who feels like your life is pointless. You could be a Christian who is unaware of any miracles taking place in your sphere of influence.

You could be... but you don't have to be.

Resurrection living is a result of faith—your active faith. That requires intentionality on your part. That requires personal investment.

The better you know Jesus, the more time you spend with Him, the more steps of faith you take, the more the resurrection life takes over.

Let me put it in terms that Jesus Himself used:

The more you give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23)...

The more you abide in Him and His words abide in you (John 15:7)...

The more you love Him and keep His commandments (John 15:10)...

Neglect of your relationship with Jesus, and a return to self-focus, will cripple the resurrection life in you.

Persistent disobedience—acceptable sins—will only deaden your soul, and render the life of Jesus ineffective in you.

If you want more of Him to show up in your life, more of that God-connection, then give yourself to acts of devotion (Bible, worship, prayer) and acts of faith.

The more you surrender, the more you trust, the more you obey, the more you *practice your faith* (put it into action), the more Christ's resurrection life will show up in your experience.