

Christ is Risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia! (congregational response) (repeat) Now that we have that response down pat, I'm going to ask you to jump in anytime you hear "Christ is Risen" with the response "**He is risen indeed**". Because you see, Easter is essentially a [message](#). Once unleashed into the world, this message has the power to change everything. It is a message of unexpected possibilities that *flies in the face of what we know to be true*¹.

What do we know to be true? We know what we experience. We know that even on Easter Sunday, relationships can be filled with stress and anxiety. We know that people we love get sick and die. We know what the women know who came to Jesus' tomb. No respiration. No heartbeat. No living. After all, dead bodies are what you find in tombs. No one expects to find the living among the dead and yet today, some 2000 years later, we somehow have the **audacity** to say CHRIST IS RISEN!

But why do we say this? Is it just because it's what we are *supposed to say*? Do the words roll off our lips like a cheer at a sporting event?

"Well I guess if everybody else is standing up and clapping and cheering, I should too". I doubt if it will make any difference though."

Don't we still have doubts about whether or not Easter is more than a nice holiday? What if all this business about an empty tomb and a body rising from the dead is just an [idle tale](#), unreliable hysteria in the face of documented facts.

That would be a perfectly natural reaction. The message of Easter is not one that inspires automatic faith. The women's words certainly didn't cause all those grieving friends of Jesus to jump up and shout, CHRIST IS RISEN! That would be an absurd contradiction from what they knew to be true. Dead is dead and those facts are no different for us. Yesterday, death claimed the lives of two dear people from this community. Lives we can never have back. Each of us has been touched by the hard reality of death -in all its forms- but I don't think anyone has experienced resurrection from the dead.

Or have we? The message of Easter is a message of unexpected possibility in the face of what we know to be true. **Easter challenges the ways things are with the hope of how things SHOULD be.** Easter dares to suggest that perhaps there really is hope of *living even among the dead*. It is a bold claim, a radical message, this shout of, CHRIST IS RISEN! But it is the power of God at work in the world to change everything and everyone so that even while we are dying, faith in the message of Easter brings life.

¹ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=4/4/2010# Craig Koester commentary on the Gospel

I can't make you believe this, only the Spirit can awaken faith within us. But the message of Easter, the good news that *living cannot be stopped by death, colors the world despite our black and white doubts*. I see it in every green shoot that pushes up out of the ground, every white lily that opens and fills the air with the fragrance of beauty. The message of Easter speaks loud and clear when forgiveness brings friends together or when love is shown even for the enemy. It rings out in every song, and projects from every picture that proclaims God as our savior, forgiver, healer, and friend. CHRIST IS RISEN! (It is LOUD by this point!)

Dear friends, Easter is what God has been about from the very beginning. The love God shows for the world in the death and resurrection of Jesus is not some plan B, as if God looked down one day, saw the mess we've made of things and said, "Oh man, now what am I going to do?" No! In the death of Jesus -in his willingness to carry out his mission of mercy even when it cost him his life- God was revealing the love that gave birth to all of creation. It is a love that knows no bounds, no limits, and no conditions. It is a love that has always been and will always be. It is a love given for you and me.

God's love is filled with the power of promise. It is the promise that no matter what happens, the Word of Life will always be the last one spoken. We pour this promise of hope onto the heads of babies. We eat and drink this promise of grace as bread and wine. God has a way of getting the power of this promise inside of us so that we do not just speak empty words, or repeat idle tales, but instead we cry out from the very depth of our being CHRIST IS RISEN!

And something quite miraculous begins to happen. Sometimes slowly, sometimes gradually and with setbacks along the way, but as surely as the rain that falls upon the earth causes the seed to sprout and grow, God changes us from the inside out. *There is something living among the dead*. Easter becomes not just a Sunday once a year where we dress up nice and hunt for eggs (although that is a lot of fun and should be done more often☺). Easter becomes a living reality that brings life from death every single day of the year. No longer are we captive to the reality of death that seems to be inevitable in this world. God has cut a trail through that darkness with the promise of life without end and invites us all to follow.

So let the colors of Easter bleed into every page of your life. Let the promise of new life comfort you in every sadness and bring healing to every broken relationship. And let the message of Easter be heard echoing through every place you go, CHRIST IS RISEN!