

# **Christ Is Risen**

**A sermon by Dr. Calvin Warpula  
preached at the West University Church of Christ,  
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We welcome you this morning and are so happy that you have joined us today in worshiping God. We Christians believe that the eternal, immortal, invisible, loving, and just God who exists from everlasting to everlasting exists is one divine being who exists in three personalities all of whom are equal in their attributes. They are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

We believe that this book, called the Bible is the revelation of this one, true God. This book tells us how that God created man for his glory and blessed man with everything he needs and has. But man rebelled against God. Man broke God's law and trusted himself rather than God. But God still loved man and provided for him all the blessings and comforts of this life. The first two-thirds of this book, called the older testament, tells the story of God working with man and taking care of him and promising him a savior that God himself would send into the world. The latter one-third of this book, which we call the New Testament, tells the story of how God fulfilled the promises he made in the first testament.

## **The Story of Jesus**

This New Testament begins with four gospels, written by four of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are beautiful stories of Jesus of Nazareth who has all the appearances of an ordinary man but who in reality is God who has come in the flesh. The great unthinkable, unimaginable truth is that God the Son came to earth and took flesh as a microscopic one-celled conception in the womb of a young unmarried woman named Mary. Mary was sexually pure. She had never known a man but God the Holy Spirit touched her womb and the God the Son was conceived in the flesh of Mary. This embryo grew for the natural nine months in the womb of Mary and was delivered through her birth canal. The truth is astounding: God the Son became flesh through a conception,

gestation, and birth through a young Jewish maiden. He was given the name Jesus which literally means “Savior.”

This Jesus grew up like any other Jewish boy of the time. After the birth of Jesus, Mary married a carpenter named Joseph and they had at least six children who made up the family of Jesus. Like all other Jewish youths, the boy Jesus learned from his guardian father Joseph and his mother, Mary. The gospel of Luke tells us, [read 2:52]. Joseph was a carpenter and he taught Jesus the trade also. The family lived in a village of Nazareth in the hills of Galilee, a place of no particular importance, a place not even mentioned in the Old Testament.

We have four chapters in our NT that depict the birth stories of Jesus: Matthew 1-2, and Luke 1-2. We have only one story from Jesus’ boyhood and that is when at the age of twelve, Jesus went to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem with his parents and other pilgrims for the Jewish feast of Passover. Jesus got lost from his family and they finally found him three days later questioning and discussing with the Jewish leaders. When Joseph and Mary questioned him, he answered, “Why were you searching for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in my father’s house?” At the age of twelve then Jesus knew who he was and what his divine mission was.

For the next eighteen years Jesus served his family. He worked in Joseph’s carpenter’s shop. Later, even he was himself called “the carpenter.” This Jesus was preparing to save the world by serving in a family in a little village tucked way up in the Galilean hills.

At the age of thirty, Jesus head the divine call on his life and traveled some 70 miles to where his cousin John was preaching and baptizing in the wilderness of Judean at the Jordan River. Jesus was baptized to initiate himself into his ministry and to identify with sinners for whom he came into the world to save. Jesus himself had no sin. He never sinned. He perfectly obeyed God the Father in everything. He was without sin but he received sinner’s baptism because he wanted to fully obey God and commit himself to his ministry of seeking and saving the lost.

For the next three years, Jesus went about doing good. He preached the message of God’s coming kingdom and he taught everywhere among the Jews in their synagogues. He had miraculous, divine powers given him from the Holy Spirit that he used to heal the sick, cast out demons, cure the lepers, and give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He calmed a storm, walked on water, and multiplied loaves and fishes. He caused the lame to walk and even raised the dead on several occasions.

Jesus called some disciples to follow him and learn of him. They were termed “apostles” because they were trained personally by Jesus and

later sent on a mission to evangelize the world. On one occasion Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus affirmed Simon’s confession and then added, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

## **The Death and Burial of Jesus**

Because Jesus condemned the hypocrisy and greed of the religious leaders, they rejected him and wanted to get rid of him. Jesus was the purest, most faithful, dearest loving person who ever walked the earth and yet the religious establishment turned against him and plotted his death. Jesus knew this would happen. At least four times in the gospel of Mark Jesus had spoken of his coming death at the hands of the Jewish leaders. But every time Jesus spoke about his death, he said he would be raised from the dead three days later.

Jesus knew the time was near. During Passover week of his 33<sup>rd</sup> year, he gathered his disciples together in an upper room and spoke with them for several hours as he prepared them for his going away. He took the servant’s role that night and washed his disciples’ feet. During the Passover meal, he took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it into pieces, and gave it to his disciples to eat. He told them, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Later in the meal, he took a cup of wine, gave thanks for it, and told them, “This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. All of you drink of it. Do this in remembrance of me.”

About midnight, Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed earnestly for God’s will to be done, no matter what. As he arose from his knees after praying for a while, he awoke his sleeping disciples and pointed to a crowd coming toward them with torches and soldiers. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, had betrayed him into the hands of his enemies. They took Jesus away to a religious trial before the Jewish Supreme court. False charges were made. The verdict was decided: Jesus must die. The next morning they took Jesus before Pilate the governor and asked for his death. Pilate interviewed Jesus three separate times and after each time said, “This man is innocent.” Yet, because of political pressure, Pilate caved in to their demands and turned Jesus over to be crucified.

The soldiers scourged Jesus which was a severe beating with a cat-o-nine-tails whip. They placed a mockery crown of thorns on his head and ridiculed him as the King of the Jews. They put a purple robe on him, placed a scepter in his hand, and knelt down before the bleeding, emaciated Jesus, and hailed him as King of the Jews.

They placed a heavy cross beam on his shoulders and lead him to a public place of execution called the place of the skull outside the city walls. They nailed Jesus to the cross and hung him high for all to pass by and revile him. They also crucified two common criminals, one to the right of Jesus and one to the left.

Jesus spoke seven times from the cross. The first thing he said was, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." One of the dying thieves confessed faith in Jesus and his kingdom. Jesus promised him, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." Jesus hung on that cross for six hours, the last three of which were in darkness. God the Father cast darkness over the land. Jesus shouted, "It is finished," and then voluntarily gave up his spirit in death as he prayed, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Jesus was dead. The spiritual son of God was dead. He who came into the world to save it was killed by his own people. He who said he was the light of the world died in darkness. He who said he was the water of life died thirsty. Jesus died. God the son now in one person with two natures, one deity, the other humanity, died on the cross. Jesus was dead. The Roman soldiers wanted to hasten the death of the three victims so they broke the legs of the other two so they could not lift themselves up to inhale, and thus they would die by asphyxiation. When they came to break Jesus' legs, they saw that he was already dead, so a soldier threw his spear into the side of Jesus. The spear pierced the sac surrounding the heart and out came blood and water. Jesus was dead, proof positive. The soldier in charge of the crucifixion confessed, "Truly this was an innocent man."

Two of Jesus' disciples secured Pilate's permission to take the body of Jesus down from the cross. They carefully wrapped his body, mummy style, with 75 pounds of precious ointment. They placed him in a private tomb in a garden near the crucifixion site and rolled a large stone weighing 1200 pounds or more over the entrance. Some women who were also disciples of Jesus watched where the men buried Jesus in the tomb. Since the Sabbath was beginning, they planned to return on Sunday morning, after the Sabbath was over, and anoint the body with more spices.

The Jewish leaders had heard talk of some supposed resurrection. To prevent the disciples from stealing the body and foisting a sham on the people, they asked Pilate to post a guard at the tomb. He agreed and also

had his own personal seal inscribed so that anyone who tinkered with the grave would face penalty of death.

That evening and the next day, the Sabbath passed quietly.

## **The Resurrection of Jesus**

Early on Sunday morning, the women came to anoint the body. When they came to the tomb, the stone covering the tomb was rolled away. The body was gone. They ran and told the disciples who investigated carefully. They noticed that the grave clothes were all there as if the body had just evaporated from it and the clothes collapsed in place. The separate head napkin was folded neatly. What had happened? This was not the work of grave robbers. Jesus had told them plainly he would be raised from the dead but at first their minds had trouble accepting the reality of it.

Several times on that very day, the day of resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to Peter, then to the two on the road to Emmaus, and then to ten disciples at supper that evening. Thomas was missing. The ten told Thomas that they had seen the Lord and that he was raised from the dead and that they had handled and touched him. Thomas said, "I will not believe it until I see it for myself and handle and touch him myself." The next Sunday night, Jesus appeared to the disciples and Thomas was present. Jesus confronted him. He saw the resurrected, risen Christ. He fell to his knees in praise and confessed Jesus by saying, "My Lord and my God."

The four gospels, the book of Acts, and the first letter to the Corinthians speak of at least twelve separate appearances of Jesus in the resurrection. He appeared to one or two, to small groups, to large groups. He appeared to men, to women, in Jerusalem, in Galilee. Hear the apostle Paul explain: [read I Cor. 15:1-8].

Paul mentions here that a large crowd of five hundred witnesses saw the resurrected Jesus. The OT law said that "at the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." What kind of confirmation would 500 witnesses be?

Suppose you are walking down the street with a man who has never seen an American flag. As you pass the post office, he sees the flag and asks, "What is that?" You explain, "Two hundred thirty five years ago men got together and signed the Declaration of Independence. We became the United States of America and that is our flag." You keep walking and you come to a church with a steeple and a cross on top. He asks, "What is that?"

You answer, "That is a church building." He asks, "What does that mean?" You answer, "Nineteen hundred eighty one years ago a man named Jesus was crucified, buried and on the third day he arose from the dead." Nobody doubts the signing of the Declaration of Independence but there were many more eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus than there were to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. There were more than five hundred witnesses who saw Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is the central, foundation fact in the gospel. Everything in Christianity hinges on the veracity of the resurrection. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no faith, no gospel, no preaching, no worship, and no mission. If the resurrection is not true, then everything is gone.

The death of Jesus for our sins and his resurrection from the dead were preached by the apostles throughout the world. The only Jesus the Bible knows anything about is the Jesus of the cross and the resurrection. Jesus is not just a good man. He is not just a good teacher. He is not just a good humanitarian. He is not just a wise philosopher. Jesus is much, much more. He is God in the flesh who came to this world to save us from our sins and to put us right with God by dying a sacrificial death for us on the cross. The resurrection three days later proves that he is who he says he is, the Son of God. God would not raise a fraud from the dead.

There is more proof for the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus than there is for almost any other fact of ancient history.

No one who doubts the resurrection does so on the basis of history. If they doubt the resurrection, they do so not because the facts are not there, or the history is confusing and unreliable, but because they have their minds made up without looking at the evidence. They say, "Dead men don't rise." That's true. Ordinary men don't come to life again after being crucified, prepared for burial, and laid in a tomb for three days. But Jesus was no ordinary man. He was the spiritual son of God. He had come from the Father. He was God the Son in human flesh. For him, it would be very much incongruous if he was not raised from the dead. He had raised others from the dead who died again. Why should it be thought that the Father would not raise him from the dead never to die again?

## **What Does the Resurrection of Jesus Mean for Us?**

**1. The resurrection means that Jesus is alive and well now.** He has ascended into the glory world to be with God the Father. He is now reigning

and ruling with the Father. He is overseeing and directing his church. We worship a living Christ. He is hearing and answering our prayers. We are not alone in our problems. We are not alone in our sorrows. We are not alone in our efforts. We are not alone in our temptations. The Lord is with us now, throughout our lives, and in our death and into eternity. "Our work in the Lord is not in vain" (I Cor. 15:58). Death is a conquered enemy. When we die, the Lord is there to meet us and take us to himself. In the resurrection at the end of time, we will be given a new, glorified body in which to serve the Lord forever.

If Jesus is Lord of the universe, and is with me, all day and all night, and will never, ever leave me or forsake me, then why should I be discouraged, joyless, pessimistic, negative, or feel guilty? The greatest fact in the universe is that Jesus lives, and if that's true, then nothing else ultimately matters.

The resurrection meets us all at our point of deepest need and gives us hope. No matter what happens here, what troubles or diseases we face, or how life turns out, there is ultimate peace, love and joy with God forever because of Jesus.

**2. The resurrection means that Jesus is God's appointed teacher of righteousness, that he is the one and only way to God, and that he is the way, the truth and the life.** The only way to God is through Jesus Christ the son. God the Father has authenticated Jesus. This is in direct contradiction to our pluralistic culture that says it makes no difference what you believe or in whom you believe as long it fulfils, satisfies, and works for you.

Christianity is the only religion in the world with an empty tomb, a conquered grave, or a living founder. All the other founders of religion are dead and buried and their tombs are marked and garnished. Their bodies are turning to dust and ashes. They have no power over death. They have no access to God. They provide no truth that is not already given in Jesus. All the good things of all world religions are already found in Jesus Christ. We do not need Buddha, or the thirty million Hindu gods, or Mohammed, or Confucius to show us the way to God because Jesus is God's one and only, his unique son and revealer. Hear Jesus [read Matt. 11:27]. This is what the apostles of Jesus preached [read Acts 4:12]. How do we know that these claims are true? Because God raised Jesus from the dead. As I said earlier, God would not raise a fraud from the dead.

**3. The resurrection of Jesus means that Jesus is coming again to raise the dead, change the living, and judge the world.** This is what the apostle Paul proclaimed in Athens when he spoke to the philosophers about Jesus. Hear him in Acts 17 [read vs. 30-31]. The resurrection of Jesus proves that Jesus will judge the world. Jesus himself said that his words are eternal and that they would judge us in the last day.

**4. The resurrection means that the church has spiritual power from God through Jesus to do God's work on earth.** The Lord told us to go to everybody everywhere and tell them the good news of forgiveness of sins, the kingdom of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As Christ followers, we must share this good news of Jesus. We cannot be silent. We must go and send, speak and tell, proclaim and publish, invite and encourage, exhort and explain, and rebuke and warn. Because Jesus lives, because there is only one Jesus, and because there is only one cross and resurrection we must go. The Lord promised that he would go with us. He promised to be with us now and until the end of the world. He gives us his power to do his work.

Today is the day of salvation. You have heard the gospel story. You know who Jesus is, what he did, what he's doing now and what he will do in the future. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). The Bible says again, "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" (Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible says that those that believe and turn from their sins are to be baptized and God will forgive their sins and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Then you are to live for Jesus. Serve him in your life. There is nothing greater in the entire world than knowing God and enjoying a relationship with him. We can help you know God now by assisting you as you give yourself to Jesus. Jesus himself said, "Whosoever will may come." He invites all and refuses none who would come to him. We have everything here prepared now to assist you. Come now, while we stand and sing this good song.

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