

April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 – Easter Sunday

Text: Luke 24

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### **Jesus Alive? Don't Be Ridiculous**

Alleluia! He is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

What a great day this is. It's Easter! The sun is shining. The flowers are all bright and fresh.

We're all dressed up (looking good). The trumpet's ringing! People singing!

We're happy. Excited. We're celebrating spring. Celebrating new life, back from the dead!

It's awesome! It's Easter morning! What a great day this is!

So... what about tomorrow? And the day after? And the day after that?

For the past two weeks I've been asking all kinds of folks one question about Easter. For two weeks I've been asking, *How does the resurrection affect your life?* How does the resurrection affect your everyday daily life? And for two weeks, I got a lot of blank stares.

He is risen indeed! Alleluia! I've always wondered about that 'indeed.' It's like we're trying to convince somebody. Or ourselves... *He is risen indeed. No, really, he is! ... Really.*

Well, it is a little tough to credit, this rising from the dead business. Kinda out of the scope of human reference. That's what it means to be human—we die. We see people die. We don't see them come back. Rising from the dead's a bit hard to fathom. Always has been. Even Jesus' closest friends and followers, who'd seen him up close, who lived with him, who called him Messiah, who heard all his promises and plans. Even they just couldn't take it in.

He is not here, he has risen. Why do you look for the living among the dead? ...

The angel asked the women at the tomb. And, if they hadn't had their faces pressed to the ground in abject terror, they might have said... *Well, we did watch him die.* Mary, Joanna, and the other Mary, they stood at the foot of the cross. They stood and wept and watched in anguish. They watched all their hopes and dreams fade as the light left Christ's eyes. Of course they came looking for a corpse. Anything else was beyond belief. *Jesus alive? Don't be ridiculous. Don't be cruel.*

Grief had robbed them of their power to even imagine it. They couldn't take it in.

But the angel insisted...

*Don't you remember? He said this would happen, just like this.*

*Jesus wasn't crazy, wasn't cruel, wasn't lying. He is **God**. And he goes on living. Always.*

Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb,

told all this to the eleven, and to all the rest....

but these words seem to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Well, they were the words of *women*. And, you know, what's that worth? Nothing. Nothing at all to men back then. That was the culture. A woman's word was not to be trusted. Women weren't even allowed to testify in court. The word of a woman? Not worth the air it's spoken on.

It seemed to them an idle tale.

And even if the women weren't hysterical, or crazy, or lying... Even if the tomb really was empty... what did *that* mean? Probably grave robbers. Or worse. Maybe the authorities took Jesus' body to further desecrate it. To really stamp out every last hope of his followers. Anything else was beyond belief. *Jesus alive?* They just couldn't take it in.

He is risen indeed. It is hard to credit. Even now.

How does the resurrection affect your everyday life...?

The profound truth of it, the reality of it—do we really take that in? ...

Do we really take it in...Or is it something we dress up for and sing about and shout about, for a day or two... Until the excitement and beauty and wonder fade away, and the lilies begin to wilt?

Resurrection's a bit out of our frame of reference. It doesn't exactly come up in conversation often, does it? *Good morning, Bob... isn't it great about the resurrection? Hey Sue, I need that report by Thursday, oh, and make sure those figures reflect eternity...don't forget the resurrection...*

Seriously... It takes a national holiday to get us to think about Christ's promise. For us to pull a few thoughts of eternal life out from under the piles and piles of everyday work and worry. Out from under the stacks of concern and struggles we all have. Out from under the grief we all face.

What do we know of resurrection? We watch our friends and loved ones die. We see relentless death all around the world. We witness the daily crucifixions of the human spirit... The violence, and poverty, and hatred all around us. In the face of overwhelming loss, it's hard to see signs of resurrection in our lives. Our daily lives make it hard to dream, to imagine, to believe in something so unbelievably good. And not just hard. A little scary too.

Maybe it's frightening to let Christ's resurrection really take hold in us.

It might just up-end our whole world-view. And shake us out of our comfort zones. A truth *that* intense. A reality that powerful. A bone-deep knowledge of eternal life... The possibilities are limitless.

Who knows where that might lead? It could change our whole lives. Challenge us to live different, speak different, act different...to *be* different.

Even if our lives are tough. Even if they're painful. Even if we want our lives to be different. Even if we

want them to change for the better... It's still scary to hope... To dream. What if we're disappointed? What if all the religious nuts are wrong? What if we get overwhelmed? What if it's just not worth the effort? What if it doesn't make a difference after all. The world around us and our day to day lives, they surround us with messages so contrary to Resurrection truth.

It is a leap of faith...

As big a leap now as it was for Jesus' first followers hearing the news:

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb...

What made him get up? What made him go check it out himself? A vague, distant hope? Some tiny inkling that maybe—just maybe—this is for real?

And what made us come here today? It's a beautiful day – we could have gone anywhere.

Maybe we're not just going through the Easter-obligation motions. Maybe there's a deep hope in us that maybe—just maybe—this is for real. A hope that peace is possible today. That joy is possible amid all our everyday darkness. That's a pretty big step of faith.

It is a step. But Christ calls us to leap.

Christ calls us to make a leap of faith that *will* change our lives. A leap of faith that will let us start living our resurrection—our new life in Christ—right now. Not in isn't some distant, after-we're-dead dream.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

What would it mean to you to start living eternal life today? ...

How might it change your life to really take in the resurrection? To start opening yourself to that wide vista of possibility. What would it be like to let the spirit of the living, breathing, loving, active Christ fill up your life every day? What would it be like to let the pure power of the resurrection fill your life?

Ask yourself. Because Christ took that cross and died for us. Because Christ rose again and broke the chains of death, so that none of us ever has to be chained by fear, darkness, apathy, sorrow or disappointment. Ask yourself. Because Jesus was not crazy. Was not cruel. Was not lying. Because he is God. And goes on living. Forever. *For you.*

But don't take the word of a woman. Don't take my word for it. Check it out yourself.

Run to the tomb like Peter did. Read more about Christ, talk to others, find out more. Talk to God. Pray.

Reflect on the resurrection. Open your heart to God's possibility. Seek out signs of the living Christ...

He's there. He's here. He's here.

Let's look for him every day. Not just this great Easter day, not just today. Let the trumpet and the song echo on. And let the thanks be to God.

Amen.