

*We were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life... (Romans 6:4)*

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Easter came early this year (March 31). It can be as early as March 22 (that won't happen for another 261 years!) or as late as April 25 (that *will* happen in 14 years!). Yet, whenever Easter falls, it is *always* a joyous occasion marked by white paraments, triumphant lilies, boisterous music and hymnody, and most importantly the proclamation of the good news that Jesus is risen!

It's rare that people celebrate anything that's happened too far in the past, because memories tend to be quite short. Easter is an exception, though. Despite Jesus' resurrection happening almost 2,000 years ago, we celebrate it more joyously now than ever before. Why? Because Easter *means something*.

Most obviously, Easter means something for Jesus. We may forget the obvious sometimes, but Easter reminds us that Jesus is no longer dead. And he was *really* dead from Friday until Sunday! If Jesus hadn't been raised, he would not be our Savior and Lord.

But Jesus' resurrection means something for us, even 2,000 years later. In his first letter to the congregation at Corinth, Paul wrote bluntly, *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied* (1 Corinthians 15:17–19). Easter means that our sins are really, actually, and fully forgiven. It's an enduring reality, like the resurrection of Jesus' itself (This is why we say that Christ *is* risen – because he is alive, never to die).

Easter means something also because Jesus' Easter has become our own Easter in Baptism. Paul, again, wrote in his letter to the Romans, *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his* (Romans 6:3–5). In Baptism, we are connected with Christ in death, but even more in life!

That life, though, begins now. Certainly, we look forward to the great and final resurrection to come, when Jesus will appear and raise us from the dead with new and Spirit-filled bodies. But that reality is already in the present. In other words, our lives are already beginning to look like the restored and sanctified people of God. Our lives look differently than the lives of those who are still enslaved to the power of sin, death, and the devil. In that same chapter of Romans, Paul concludes, *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions...now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life* (Romans 6:11–12, 22). What good news that Jesus Christ is risen! And what good news that *our* new life starts now!

-Pastor Squire

“Jesus lives! For me He died, hence will I, to Jesus living, pure in heart and act abide, praise to Him and glory giving. All I need God will dispense; this shall be my confidence.”

(“Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won” *LSB* 490, v. 3)