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# Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 5 April 2026 • Easter

Acts 10:34-43 • John 20:1-18

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May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

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

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The long-awaited day has arrived; Christ has risen. He has conquered death. He has descended to hell and risen up again to sit on God's right hand. He has fulfilled the words of the prophets and satisfied his Father's plan.

Christians will celebrate all around the world this day. This is our big festival, for it celebrates how, in one wonderful act, God's great love is shown to us. As John says, God so loves us that he sent his only Son, and that Son completely fulfilled the Father's plan of love for us. As we celebrate, it is good to think about what, exactly, Jesus has done, and how he has done it, and what it means for us.

First, he did it alone, because he alone was capable of it. We could not — cannot — save ourselves. We need Jesus’s healing action, taken through the grace of God, to make us right with God. Only Jesus can save us. Does this seem strange? Jesus told the disciples several times that man is a brotherhood, that all people are made in God’s image, and thus that they must live together in harmony and help each other. Jesus was as human as any of us. In his mission here on earth, he showed the disciples and his other followers what it meant to live as a child of God, what it meant to live as God wants us to. We are to love each other — which means we tend each other when we’re sick, we celebrate with each other when we’re happy, we share with each other when we’re in want. Humans are meant to live in communion. Jesus as a man shared everything the disciples shared: their bread, their clothing, where they slept; he shared their prayers and joys and sorrows. There must have been many times when Peter or John or James reached down a hand to help Jesus up a rocky place or out of the boat, just as he would have helped them.

But when it came to his death, he was on his own. The disciples had fallen away, the crowds had deserted him; he had no one to speak for him or even to help him carry the cross —except for Simon of Cyrene, who at least helped him some of the way. He had prayed the night before that he might be relieved of this terrible duty, but he was resolved nevertheless to follow his Father’s plan, and God strengthened him for the task.

On the cross, hands and feet nailed to the wooden planks, Jesus was alone. Only he could take this journey, on the cross and beyond. Even his Father abandoned him at the end. There, with the terrible pain and exhaustion of his ordeal, he was alone. And what he accomplished on his own strengthens and inspires us still today.

Second, what Jesus accomplished, he accomplished for all time. God took the concept of regular sacrifice and turned it upside-down. Rather than putting an animal or a bird to death at every major festival, several times a year, Jesus made his sacrifice only once. That was enough for all of us for all time.

Third, Jesus gave his life for us, that we might live. I heard someone say the other day that Jesus’s sacrifice wasn’t really a sacrifice, because he came back to life. Usually when we speak of someone “making the ultimate sacrifice,” such as giving your life for another on the field of battle, that person stays dead. It’s over. So is Jesus’s sacrifice less of a sacrifice because he came back to life? It’s a good question. I would contend that sacrifice consists of intention and follow-through. If someone points a gun at you and I jump in front of the gun, then I have sacrificed myself. I intended to save you, and I went ahead and did it. Whether I die or not does not affect the fact that I have made a sacrifice of myself.

But of course, Jesus did die. And so whatever suffering we go through, whatever pain we have, or loss, or deep grief — Jesus knows what it feels like. He was human, he's been there. He has known the suffering unto death. Betrayed, deserted, tortured, dying in agony, Jesus has known the greatest suffering. And because of this, we can bring our suffering to him, and he will understand. He will comfort us out of his knowledge of what it's like to suffer, and out of his love for us, which is as wide and as deep as the oceans.

Fourth, Jesus did not only die — we wouldn't be celebrating if that's where the story ended! He rose again! He died and came back to life. He conquered death — death had no power over him. As Paul is fond of saying, without the Resurrection, there is no point to being a Christian. We preach Christ crucified and risen, because in Christ and through Christ we see our own eternal life. Jesus, the greatest teacher, teaches best by example. First he suffered, and we know that we will be supported in our own suffering because he did. Then, he came back to life, and we know that we will also rise because he did.

Jesus showed us the abundance of life that God holds out for us. It flows from God's creative power. God, with Jesus Christ, who has been with God since the beginning, created all things in heaven and earth. Life is the great holy force which fills all things, but it does not exist on its own. It flows from God. We, as God's beloved creation, were made to share in that unending life; but through our own actions, we went astray. We as humanity did not recognise and honour the Maker of all, and so we lost that blessing of life.

In God's endless mercy and love, he brought us back to himself by sending his only Son. Through Jesus we have another chance to share in abundant life, life which never ends. In love, Jesus went forward to the cross even though he dreaded it, even though he could have refused. In love he gave his own life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

On this Easter day, surrounded here by the beauty of flowers and the inspired artistry of men and women, in communion with our brothers and sisters, and looking out to the glorious day outside, let us remember and give our most profound thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for what he has done for us. He gives us the greatest gift of all: life eternal in himself. Go out and spread the joyous news: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**