

## **Focused Resurrection Joy/Peace**

*“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; His is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just He told you.”* Now, I know at this point it’s easy to look down our noses at these women. After all, they were seeking a dead Jesus; ***not a living Jesus***, in spite of all that He told them about His death and His resurrection on the third day. It’s easy to look down upon them because their grief did get the better of them and they had forgotten all that Christ had so clearly said about His resurrection. ***But...nobody is ever too quick to go there.*** Why? Because we’ve been there too, haven’t we? We can excuse their “situational disbelief,” their failure to remember and trust in the midst of this particular extenuating circumstance. After all, they had been traumatized. Their whole world had come crashing down less than 72 hours earlier. We’ve all been there before, to one extent or another. ***We understand. We can empathize.*** So...we cut ‘em some slack. We give ‘em a pass. *“Judge not, lest ye be judged,”* right?

But do you see what’s happened here? The focus has shifted from the resurrected Christ and His Word, shifting instead to the women. In fact, if we’re truly honest, ***we’ve shifted the focus to us and our occasional disbelief and doubt.*** We see ourselves in these women. We see ourselves in their fear and sorrow. We know what it is to believe...but not always believe, especially when our world is crashing down all around us. To call out their sin of unbelief (which is what it is) is to call out our sin of unbelief; our sin of not trusting in God above all things all the time. But—again—there’s the problem: ***Our focus is wrongly focused. We make it all about our favorite topic—ourselves.***

When the angel proclaimed that the crucified Christ was/is risen from the dead, he focused the ladies on Christ and His Word. *“Remember what He said to you? This is resurrection fact...just like He told you.”* They were focusing on a tomb. They were focusing on a big stone obstructing their access to a decaying corpse. They weren’t focused on Christ’s Word and Promise. ***And—yes—the same can be said of us too, at times.*** *“Look here. He’s not here. Look in Galilee. Seek Him in Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.”* Again, the focus is being put on Christ and His Word/Promise. And Christ kept that Word and Promise. He said what He meant, and He meant what He said. For forty days after the resurrection, Jesus made Himself present and known, right where He told them to seek Him; right where He promised to be.

***What has this same resurrected Lord said to you?*** I ask this because it is easy to get focused on the wrong things, especially when things seem dark and our morale runs low and our faith is stretched and tested. Even on a glorious day like

today, we can get focused on the wrong things. I know that sounds strange, but it's true. Like those women that first Easter morning, we put all our focus on the tomb. ***Yes, I know that the tomb is empty, and praise God that it is.*** But...if you remember, the focus didn't **end** there at the tomb. "*Look here. He's not here. Have a nice day.*" No! The focus necessarily shifted from where He wasn't to where He was!

This is our focus today, not just on the empty tomb and where He isn't, ***but also to where He is;*** to where He tells us to seek Him and see Him and hold fast to Him. Look to the cross. He's no longer there, although He still bears the marks of crucifixion on His body. He is "the crucified One." ***And this is Good News of the highest order.*** These are the very wounds that He held out to that room full of bewildered and terrified disciples when He proclaimed "*Peace.*" And just in case they didn't believe Him the first time, He said it again—"Peace." It is these very cruciform marks your Lord ever presents to the Father, ***forever*** proclaiming and showing the proof of your redemption; the blood-bought proof that His Word is true: "*It is finished.*" Christ's peace—true peace—is known only in the wounds of the crucified One, who once was dead, but now lives.

Your Lord speaks this same peace to you today. He has baptized you into this all-availing peace. "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized have been baptized into His death and resurrection?*" His victory over sin, death, and the grave is ***our*** victory over sin, death, and the grave. But...it doesn't always seem that way, does it? ***What has He told you?*** No matter what the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh may tell you; no matter what all your experience may tell you, you belong to Christ. "*Did God really say...?*" Yes! You are forgiven. You are righteous and holy in His sight. It is finished. The victory is already yours. Like Job, though the world may crash down all around you, you are in Christ, and your victory is already won; already assured...***just like He told you.***

Look no further than this altar. What has your risen and victorious Lord already told you? "*This is My Body. This is My blood. As often as you do this, remember what I have said; remember what I have told you.*" Listen and look to where Christ is! Here is Christ, for us, for our forgiveness, for our confidence and assurance, for our peace!

I say this—again—because I am well aware of the fallen and sinful world we live in. I am well aware of the ***endless crosses and griefs and sufferings*** we daily and often bear/endure. I know that for some of you, today is especially difficult. For some of you the wound of grief is especially ***fresh and raw.*** Your loved one isn't with you to celebrate this great and glorious day. And yet...through it all and even in the midst of it all, we do have peace—the peace of Jesus Christ. For those struggling with grief, remember what He has already told you. Your loved one is with Christ. They're not looking down upon you. They're

focused on Christ. They're not golfing or shopping or catching up with old friends. They're with Jesus, focused on Jesus. Again, I direct your focus to the altar. I direct you to the communion rail; to this side of your Lord's feast table. Here is this same Christ...for you. While you commune with Christ at this end of His feast table, they—at the same time—are with the same victorious Christ at the heavenly end of His feast table. They are with you because they are with Christ and Christ is with you. It is truly a communion of the saints! How's that for peace?! You won't find this peace anywhere else!

*And the best is still yet to come, not just for us, but for all those who now rest from their labors.* Do you remember what He has said? All those who fall asleep in Christ will be raised in the flesh—perfected and new—their souls reunited with their bodies for all eternity. Jesus is the firstfruits of all who live and die in the faith. He will **never** die again. He will **never** be raised again. **He IS risen.** Folks like Lazarus and Jairus' daughter? They were resurrected...*but then they died again.* Lazarus isn't still with us. His bodily resurrection still awaits, as does the bodily resurrection of all those who've fallen asleep in Christ. *But Christ has risen and will forever be risen, the first of all who live and die in Him.* His resurrection will be our resurrection. We have His Word and Promise. We have His resurrection proof and peace. *We have that peace right now.* Why? The One who was crucified and has risen victoriously from the dead bespeaks/gives His victorious peace to us. Listen to His Word. Listen and taste and see! See where He is...for you; for your assurance, your confidence, your peace.

*I guess the only question remaining: How could you keep such joyous peace contained? Go and tell.* Go and tell all that Christ has done for you and for all the world in His suffering, death, and resurrection. Go and tell all that He continues to do for you and for all who draw near to Him in the humility of repentant faith.

As far as focus goes...to Him alone be all glory, all praise, and all honor.

**AMEN**