

“Who is this King of Glory?” (Easter Sunday)

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Easter Sunday - the most exhilarating day of the year for Christians across the world both now, and in generations past. This is the day we remember, in a more focused way than every other day of the year, the miraculous, the wonderful, the essential, the life-restoring, the heaven-opening resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a glorious morning that was! But if we truly want to celebrate that day when Jesus rose again and conquered sin and death – our sin and death – then we need to begin, just for a moment, where that day began – in darkness and despair as we ask the Holy Spirit right now to open our hearts, open our spirits, so we might grasp the magnitude of the most devastating two words we could ever put together: **Christ died.**

Those words should be enough to break your heart into a thousand pieces and cast you to the floor in worship! Christ died - for you - and I pray that we never lose the magnitude of that statement – never. The spotless, sinless, innocent Jesus Christ actually died *because* of us – *for* us – *instead* of us. But we gather *today* to affirm that Christ did not remain dead. It's not just the cross of Christ which saves us. It's not just the death of Christ which brings us new life and eternity in the presence of our God. Without the resurrection, there is no gospel, there is no victory. If Christ had remained dead there would be nothing. All hope would be dashed for the entire human race.

But God the Father has vindicated His only begotten son by raising Him from the dead! And by raising Christ from the dead, God has placed His seal on the finished work of Christ. The resurrection of Jesus was God's personal signature on your pardon from all sin - past, present and future! In the death of Christ we find the door to heaven and eternity in God's presence. In the resurrection of Christ we are handed the key to that door! As God rolled that stone away and called forth His Son from the dead, He declared to all mankind, to every angel and demon and to the devil himself, that the deal is done! And what a deal!! Our trash exchanged for His treasure! The sins of all humanity have been atoned for and the righteousness of Christ is now given freely to all!

Christ died. Christ rose again from the dead. Then forty days later, Christ ascended to the right hand of His Father. Now the ancients, the Patristic fathers of the first five centuries, would always use Psalm 24, the ascension Psalm, to describe when Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and we will read some of that in a moment.

As Bible-believing evangelicals, we have always defended the deity of Christ, that is, His divine nature. Jesus Christ was God, in the most complete and full sense of the term. I don't know of any committed Christians who stumble over that clear fact. However, on the flip side of that coin, an absolutely equal truth which must be embraced with the same intensity, is that Jesus Christ was a man – a human being – in the most complete and full sense of the term – just like you and me – no different. There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity - the man, Jesus. Now I am using the term 'man' here to describe the race of humanity - not a male - there is no gender in theology. Man has sinned. The wages of sin is death. A man must die and a man must rise from the dead.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said that a ladder that reaches only to the top will do us no good; and a ladder that reaches only to the bottom is no help at all. We need a ladder that reaches from the bottom to the top and the top to the bottom – we need a Saviour who is God and man! That man is Jesus!

He died, He rose again and He ascended to the right hand of the Father and listen to this friends – for the first time in the history of the universe, a man walked up to the doors of heaven and cried out what we read in verse 7 of Psalm 24: *“Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!”* And all of heaven behind those doors are in utter shock and silence and wonder. When finally a brave one lifts his head and begins to speak, *“Who is this King of Glory?” Who dares speak to these doors! No man has ever dared come this far or lay his hand to the latch of this door! Who is this King of Glory?”*

Then, the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the man Who is *for* us - answers the question of all questions when He says, *“The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.(now) lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in!”* Then for the first time ever – the doors of Heaven open for a man! And as He walked through those doors ... everything that has ever been made, fell on its face! All hail the power of Jesus’ name, let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him, crown Him Lord of all! Crown Him! Crown Him with many crowns, this Lamb upon the throne!

I can just see Him now, walking up to His Father boldly, because it was His right! Climbing the steps of that throne which made Solomon’s throne look like a Lego model, and this man, this Christ, sits down without even asking permission. Then He looks at His Father and says, not as a question, but as an affirmation, *“Father, it is finished.”* And the Father says, *“Son, it is finished indeed!”* This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and Christ of all!

Now this is where many preachers would jump in and ask you to make Jesus Christ Lord of your life. Not me. Not ever! That is the most preposterous thing I could ever ask you to do. Jesus Christ *is* Lord of your life. Whether you serve Him or not. Whether you bless Him, curse Him, love Him or hate Him, or just ignore Him ... He *is* the Lord of your life because God has made Him the Lord of your life .. and every life .. and all of creation! God has given Him a name that is above every other name so that at the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is both Lord and God! Some will bow the knee to Him willingly out of the grace that has been given to you and others will bow because your kneecaps have been broken by the One who rules the nations with a rod of iron – but hear God’s word today friends: every knee *will* bow and every tongue *will* confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all creation and every human heart!

I will never apologise for *this* Lord Whom I serve and before Whom I stand this day. He is the King of Glory. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the only reason any of you are still breathing and the only reason all of humanity has not been consumed by the holiness and purity and power of our God. I want you to know that there *is* a God in heaven and He *is* worthy of all praise and and glory and honour and He demands such from you and me. And He has made that possible, in His glory, in His grace, in His love, for you to come to Him today and every day. He cries out, *“All who are thirsty, come and drink. All who are hungry, come and eat. Why do you spend your money on that which will not satisfy? Come and drink my living water so you will never thirst again!”*

This God is calling each one of you and me all the time, to repent and believe the gospel. To repent is simply to change your mind, your focus, your direction. You once thought this about God and yourself and your world, now you think this and walk in that reality and make whatever choices you need to in order to reflect that new reality. That’s all repentance is and God will give you that too, as a free gift, if you ask Him here today and every day!

Believing the gospel is also not complicated. You have heard the gospel here today – the good news of what God has done for you in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how that work of God, in Christ, has dealt with the problem of your unholiness and dislocation from God forever so you can now enter into the reality of God’s kingdom now and into fellowship with Him in Christ now – not just after you die. Believe *that* Truth, believe *that* gospel and your life will change. You will never be the same again!

You may have come here today just because that's what you do on Easter Sunday and have always done. It's a family tradition. Nothing wrong with that. But what you may not realize is God was here waiting for you and He has so much more for you today if you will let Him speak to you. His expectations of this time here are so much greater than yours!

Some of you I will see again in this place over the next few weeks and many of you I will not. But I believe with all my heart that each one of you has been brought here today by God, not so you can tick the box on a family tradition or celebrate some religious festival. God couldn't care less about our religious festivals! God brought each and every one of you here today to bless you with the Truth – a Truth that will set you gloriously and permanently free. A Truth that will open the eyes of your heart and your spirit to God's amazing grace, God's undeserved forgiveness and God's overwhelming, unconditional love.

God loves you – just as you are – with all your sin and all your doubt and all your fear - God loves you. He is asking right now that You let His love break through to your heart; let His love push past any preconceptions you have of Him or the church; let His love drive out any fear, guilt or shame; let His love overcome any bad experiences you may have had at the hands of fallible Christians; let His love heal you, restore you and draw you back to the place your spirit has been longing to be since you were born: in the presence of your God.

As you receive His love today and embrace what He has done for you in Christ, I guarantee His love will transform your life and change the way you think and feel and live and relate to people. When the Spirit of God opens your spirit to God's kingdom, God's reality – it is like walking out of the optometrist with your first set of spectacles and looking up the street and seeing a whole new world. It was always there. It was always clear to those who could see it. But now, *you* can see it too with a new clarity and with that new vision, comes a whole new reality for you.

As Jesus stood before His friend, the Apostle Peter many years ago, He looked Him in the eye and asked the most important question of Peter's life: "*Who do you say that I am?*" Friends, that same Jesus is here today and He is looking each of us in the eye and He is asking the same question: "*Who do you say that I am?*" There are only three possible answers. Choose one carefully. He is either a liar, a lunatic or He *is* the Lord of your life and the Lord of all creation.

Now if you can read the Bible and look at the course of human history and search the depths of your own heart and then declare that Jesus is a liar or a lunatic – then I bless you and I respect your conclusion and your life will be lived in the shadow of that conclusion.

But if you are left with no alternative but to acknowledge Jesus Christ is, in fact, the Lord or Lords and the King of Glory I read to you in Psalm 24, then I ask you now, God asks you now: how then shall you live today, tomorrow and the rest of your days in the shadow of *that* conclusion – *that* spiritual revelation? How will your life change as you stand face to face right here with the risen, present, living Christ in our midst?