

## Celebrate New Life with Jesus

Adapted from a sermon by Matthew Rogers @ SErmonCentral.Com.

Matthew 28:1-10

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One minute he was peacefully perched inside his birdcage, and the next he was sucked in, washed up and blown over.

His problems began when Chippie's owner decided to vacuum out his bird cage.

About the time she stuck the vacuum hose inside the cage, the telephone rang and distracted her attention. When she turned, Chippie was gone. She immediately hung up the telephone and looked inside the vacuum cleaner bag – sure enough, Chippie was there – alive, but stunned.

Since he was covered with dirt and debris, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom where she stuck him under the faucet and ran cold water over him for two minutes. She then realized that the bird was soaked and shivering, so she did what any compassionate bird-owner would do, she reached for her hair dryer and blasted the bird with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

Several days later, when the reporter who had originally covered the story called to see how Chippie's recovery was coming along. The owner said, "*he's okay, but Chippie doesn't sing much anymore; he just sits and stares.*"

Well, I guess so! After being sucked in, washed up and blown over, that's enough to take the song from the stoutest of hearts. When circumstances suddenly change for the worst and take us out of fairly peaceful territory, it's never an easy adjustment.

Maybe you can relate to Chippie. Perhaps you've gone through times when things changed rather quickly for the worse:

Pink slips were handed out

- Divorce papers were served
- A Policeman knocks on your front door.
- Someone very close to you unexpectedly passed away

And in that moment, you lost your song; perhaps you thought you'd never hum its tune again. If so, you're not much different from the disciples, early that first Easter morning.



Things had been going great for them. For the past 3 years they had traveled with Jesus, seen him perform miracles, and grown to trust

him deeply. But now he had been crucified – gone – dead – never to be seen again. Talk about being sucked into a dungeon of despair. Talk about getting doused with a measure of cold reality. Talk about getting blown over by empty promises! If you had inquired about the disciples right after Jesus' death, you might have heard, "They don't sing much anymore. They just sort of sit and stare." But then something happened! Their world and ours would never be the same.

That story was related to us in today's text: Matthew 28:1-10

What happened is that Jesus rose! He didn't stay dead! He defeated death. The Bible tells us that when the disciples heard the news, "They were overjoyed!;" I imagine that's somewhat of an understatement (John 20:20). Their song was gone, but they got it back! And they celebrated.

**What I'd like to share with you this morning is that Jesus' victory over death still gives us reason to celebrate both his life and ours!**

Why is this so? Here are 3 reasons.



Our first reason is a future reason: Jesus' victory over death gives us cause to celebrate our future life and his, because one day we also can hope to hear God say "*Good Job! Welcome home!*"

To those awestruck disciples staring into that empty tomb, the angel said .... "*Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead,'*"(Matthew 28:5-6)

**Jesus' resurrection expresses God's satisfaction with what Jesus has done.** In the resurrection, God was shouting, "Good Job, Jesus! Way to go! You did it! You completed the work I asked you to do!"

Or as Jesus so rightly said on the cross before he died, "***It is finished.***" The resurrection is God's "**Amen!**" to Jesus', "It is finished."

You know there are a number of things I could never hope to hear...

- A call from the Chicago Cubs asking me to suit up and play,
- Regis Philbin asking me if that's my final answer
- A stranger stopping me to say, "Excuse me. Aren't you Sean Connery?"
- My wife saying, "Honey, could you put on some classical music, I'm in the mood for a symphony!"
- One other thing I know I'll never hear is God saying, "John, you make me sick!"

Instead, the Bible says, because Jesus rose again after he died, those who follow him can look forward to one day hearing for themselves, "**Welcome Home – son.**

**Welcome Home – daughter.**" The last thing Jesus told his disciples was that he was going to prepare a place for them and that one day he would bring them to live with him for eternity. And then he promised them that his own resurrection would prove that he had accomplished this task.

A Sunday School teacher had just finished telling her third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb with a great stone sealing the opening. Then, wanting to share the excitement of the resurrection, she asked: "*And what do you think were Jesus' first words when He came bursting out of that tomb alive?*" A hand shot up into the air from the rear of the classroom. Attached to it was the arm of a little girl. Leaping out of her chair she shouted out excitedly "I know, I know!" "Good" said the teacher, "*Tell us, what were Jesus first words.*" And extending her arms high into the air she said: "**TA-DA!**"

Because Jesus lives. He has promised us that we too can come out of the grave and say "TA-DA." And then instead of facing a Judge, we can also look forward to hearing those words – "**Welcome Home – Son/ daughter.**

this is a great reason to celebrate your future – brought to you, courtesy of the resurrection of JESUS

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Here then is a second reason why Jesus' victory over death gives us reason to celebrate both our current life and his - and it's a present reason: which is because he lives... WE CAN (now) EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

The angel said, "*He is not here, he has gone ahead of you...*" (Matthew 28:6-7)

Did you realize that Stone wasn't rolled away so much to let Jesus out as much as it was to let us see in? Jesus had no problem walking through stone walls, which he would soon prove to the bewildered disciples that evening (John 20:19). But the women were only looking for a dead body and there was a large stone blocking their entrance to him. So the angel removed the stone to show them that he was no longer in the tomb, but had gone elsewhere. Then suddenly a very much alive Jesus was standing there greeting and comforting them. After that he told the women to tell his disciples that he would also meet with them in a few days in another location. And as quickly as he had appeared, Jesus was gone elsewhere.

The US Postal service once had to return a letter addressed to "*Christ the King.*" The yellow label stuck on the envelope read, "*Return to Sender. Christ the King: Moved – Left No Address – Unable to Forward.*

We won't find him in a tomb. He's not there. Where is he? In bodily form he's seated at the right side of God in heaven. But Jesus is also now present wherever Christians go, wherever Christians gather, because he also lives within each one of us through God's indwelling Holy Spirit. A Celtic version of the Apostles Creed declares that Jesus "*ascended into heaven, to be everywhere present.*" As a human, Jesus could only be one place at a time, but now once again glorified as God's son, and living with us through the Holy Spirit, Jesus can be everywhere Christians go.

Since he's still alive, and still with us, we can expect amazing things to happen! We live in a world where the extraordinary has already taken place!

- If he rose from the dead, maybe he can fix up my marriage too!
- Maybe he can help me get my life turned around
- Maybe he can help me know what to do with that big decision I'm facing

God rolled the stone out of their way, so the women could see that Jesus was no longer trapped inside. God is still rolling stones out of the way for people who feel trapped inside whatever difficulty they are facing. He can roll any stone away for you today If you let Him, if you ask Him.

But, if you want to stay dead, I'm sure he'll leave you in your tomb. Jesus doesn't need dead people -- he wants people who want to live, thus he is still in the business of bringing people back to life.

Once when a man tried to use a funeral to excuse himself from following, Jesus remarked *let the dead bury their own – you follow me* (Matthew 8:22).

At another time he said: *I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly* (John 10:10). If Jesus can come back to life after being three days dead – I am sure that he can help you out of whatever dead end you've wound up in – But don't expect him to necessarily do it in an expected way.

Chuck Colson and Jim Baker were two famous fakes who actually found freedom, a new life, and genuinely successful career really working for God – after they had gone to prison (that wasn't expected ). Makes me wonder what changes prison life will bring for this latest batch of politicians and lawyers now headed there; Colson's Prison Fellowship is still quite active.

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And one final reason why Jesus victory over death helps us celebrate our life is because His resurrection proves that... WE CAN HAVE A FRESH START ... RIGHT NOW!

Marks Gospel records the resurrection story slightly different. In his account, the angels say "*Go, tell his disciples and Peter...*" (Mark 16:7). All the disciples, except John, had deserted Jesus and run away when he was arrested. And yet these were the people that Jesus, newly risen from the dead, – was most concerned about – these were first people he went looking for.

I don't think it's any coincidence that the discovery of the empty tomb took place, "*as the first day of the week was dawning.*" (Matthew 28:1).

It was at the beginning of a new day.

At the beginning a new week.

A new beginning

A fresh start

No one would have appreciated this fresh start more than Peter. He had been in Jesus' inner circle of friends and he had promised Jesus – just before he was arrested -- that he, would always stick by him no matter what happened; going even to prison or death with him; only to be told that before tomorrow's sun rose he would three times deny even knowing Jesus (Luke 22:33-34). And just as Jesus had predicted, Peter, like the other disciples, fled at his arrest and denied knowing Jesus 3 times that same night.

Now, It's very likely that Peter dictated the events as Mark wrote them down in his Gospel account. So you can almost picture it, as Peter gets to this part in the story about Jesus rising from the dead. And he begins to say those words that he was told the angel said - those words that must have meant the world to him - he might have gotten a lump in his throat just saying them... *go, tell his disciples AND PETER!*

Make sure Peter knows that Jesus has risen from the dead – **because as guilty as he feels right now, he especially needs to know that he can have a fresh start.**



Perhaps you've made some mistakes in life; even big mistakes.

You know what it's like to suffer the consequences of poor decisions.

Maybe you're feeling guilty and you wish you could just start over



You can! Because Jesus rose from the dead you can start over!

It's called new birth and it happens by asking Jesus Christ to come into your life; to come live and walk with you. When you admit your need for His help and accept his offer of forgiveness

and rebirth, as promised, He will forgive you of everything you've done wrong. God is into fresh starts, God always allows U-Turns.

Jesus really wants you to know that he is still alive and willing to walk with you throughout the rest of your life.

Yes, when you ask Christ to come into your life, you get a genuine, very real, spiritual rebirth and his promise to forever walk with you thereafter. When we then follow his instruction to be baptized it's an incredibly visual reminder that with Jesus the old stuff gets buried, and a new life begins. As we join with other Christians, serving, praying , studying his word, each day his presence in our life gives us great reasons to celebrate to hope!

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It's pretty easy to see, isn't it, that Jesus' victory over death really does give you reasons to celebrate both your future and present life, now to be lived forever with him. As the hymn joyously proclaims, *because he lives you can face tomorrow, and life is worth the living, just because he lives.*

One of the most important battles ever fought was at a place called Waterloo in Belgium, on June 18, 1815. British General Wellington had joined forces with the Dutch, the Belgians, and the Prussians, to defeat a military genius, who was a madman, by the name of Napoleon. If Napoleon defeated Wellington then he would have most all of Europe, his empire would be complete and France would rule the world.

So the battle raged on and on, and all of England waited for word that would come out of Belgium. There were no radios, no phones. A ship would flash a message through light signals from close to the battle-front on to another ship who in turn would send the signal to England.

On the final day the ship got as close as they could to the battle ready to send the signal. But just as the message was flashed, "Wellington Defeated," one of those dense fogs that England is so famous for set in. Whether or not there had been more to the signal they couldn't make out the rest of it, due to the fog. So, England went to bed that night convinced of defeat and wondering how soon it would be until the army of France would march through the streets of England. But, early the next morning the fog lifted and they could read the whole message, "Wellington defeated the enemy at Waterloo."

On that Judean hillside, as Jesus was crucified, a spiritual fog drifted over the land; it was there all Friday, all Saturday, but early on Sunday morning the message was clearly there to be seen. Jesus Christ defeated the enemy at Calvary. He rose!

And he still gives us reason to celebrate. **The promise of Jesus is not to add years to your life, but to add life to your years; from the moment you accept him into your life – and then right on into eternity.**

If you've been sucked in, washed up and blown over...

If you could use a reason to celebrate, I hope that maybe today you've found one. I pray that you'll leave here this morning with a new song in your heart; the kind only Jesus can give.

Because of the resurrection

We Live with the hope of hearing, "Welcome Home!"

We can still expect the unexpected

We can enjoy a fresh start

by all means if God's calling you to a new way of life – don't go home the same!

Let's pray about this.