

**Resurrection Sunday**  
**It's still Good News!**

**There is a lot of bad news**, lots of things to be **afraid of or anxious** about. Particularly Christians when looking at what is happening around us.

**There are plenty of reasons to be negative.**

**The destructive nature of fear and anxiety that turns negative is that we can lose our ability to see The Kingdom of God.** We understand the kingdom of God as the **restoration of God's loving rule** over all things. This is **what God is doing**, which is good, in this messed up world.

**It's like the guy who loved limburger cheese.** If you've never had it, you haven't missed much. It stinks to high heaven. My dad liked it. He would spread it on crackers. We would leave the house.

**The story goes like this.** A man was eating limburger cheese. He didn't really notice the smell, because he expected it. While eating, he got a piece stuck in his substantial mustache. As he sat in the kitchen, he noticed that the kitchen stunk. So, he gets up and walks into the living room and proclaims, "the living room stinks." He moves to the bedroom and again, to his dismay, it also smelled bad. That man started to get really frustrated, even angry. So, he went out into his front yard and said, "this yard stinks." He gets into his car and yet again, "This car stinks." He drives to the center of town, gets out of his car, takes a sniff, and says, "This town stinks." Beyond himself with disgust he drives outside the town, up onto a mountain, where he could see for miles. He takes a big sniff and proclaims with disgust and defeat, "The world stinks."

**He brought the stink into all of those places.** He was the problem, not his kitchen, house, yard, town, or world.

**It's really easy to live like everything stinks.** The world is going to **hell in a handbasket.**

**With that kind of attitude, it is easy to miss the reality that, today, is about good news.** It was good news **when it happened.** It is good news

today and will be good news when Jesus returns for those who are ready. **All the reasons why we might think that life stinks, or that this generation is messed up, can put a smoke screen between you and some really good news.**

Here's what a **man named Paul**, who was, at one time, a man who **persecuted and even arrested** the first Christ followers. He met this resurrected Jesus on a dusty road heading for the city of Damascus. Jesus spoke to him from out of a blinding light. Paul became **one of the most important leaders in the early days of the church helping it spread** across the world, Palestine, Asia Minor, and Europe.

**Here's how he describes this really good news.** Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. <sup>2</sup> It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. <sup>3</sup> I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. <sup>4</sup> He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. <sup>5</sup> He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>7</sup> Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. 1 Corinthians 15:1-9 NIV

Look at the list of **eyewitnesses**. Many of these people **lost their lives** because they believed and proclaimed to others that Jesus was, indeed, alive. **It's not a nice story with a moral or lesson.** This is **historical, but at the same time, relevant.** It's **living history, not dead history**, which is only about facts. **This is about a fact that changes us because it is alive.**

Here's the point...**Jesus' resurrection announces Good News!**

**Good news = gospel** which is a proclamation of good news. If you were to check this passage in several **different translations**, you would see that

some use good news and others use the world gospel. The world gospel comes from the idea of a **messenger being sent to people back home** that the battle had been won and the war is over. We have been victorious.

**So, how does this event, from centuries ago, still announce good news that the battle has been won and victory is ours.** Let's start with the **very worst news that becomes the very best news.** Because of the resurrection of Jesus...**Death does not have the last word.**

Jesus taught many times using **parables**. Often, these parables were used to **describe the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven**. These terms are interchangeable. In **Matthew 25**, Jesus teaches about a **master who goes away**, leaving different amounts of money to three servants. **Two of the three did something with the money causing it to grow** in amount, while one simply hid his. Here's what the master said to the servants who increased what was given to them. **Here's what happened when the master returns.** <sup>21</sup> **"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:21 NIV** You can also translate that last word rest.

**These are the last words and those are coming from Jesus. The story doesn't end at death, it continues into rest and happiness.**

**Because of the resurrection, those who have put their trust in Jesus will be able to rest, saying these things about themselves.** <sup>6</sup> **For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.** <sup>7</sup> **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** <sup>8</sup> **Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.** **2 Timothy 4:6-8 NIV** **Even with all of our brokenness and shortcomings and faults we will be able to say this about ourselves. There will be an end to regret, fear, and guilt. We will be able to say, "I struggled for the right thing and that is Jesus and his kingdom. I didn't give up, even with all my stumbling and all the forces of this world that try to draw me away. I kept believing that what Jesus started in this world and in me would be completed, no matter how dark things seemed."**

**Don't you want to be able to say that at the end? My dad was at peace when he fell into the arms of Jesus this year, because I know that he was able to hear the first words from Jesus and because he was called, "good and faithful servant" by his Lord he was able to say the second phrase about himself.**

Jesus' resurrection announces Good News, because death no longer has the last word. **It's still good news because Jesus' resurrection announces that...I can be a new person.**

**In our culture, people want to reinvent themselves. Here's how it goes. You don't like your life or how people are responding to you, you want to make more money, live your best life, so you try to repackage or rebrand yourself. "I used to be a boring married person in a rut, but now I'm a cool, still young, and singly working out at planet fitness as a part of the reinventing of myself."**

This is like **painting a wall without washing, scraping, and sanding first. This is like what the Bible says about cleaning the outside of the bowl, but not the inside.**

<sup>25</sup> "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! <sup>26</sup> You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too. <sup>27</sup> "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Matthew 23:25-27

**The problem with reinventing is that it's all external. It's not a real, deep, character level change. It's just dressing up the old and acting like it's new. "The clothes don't make the man" as the saying goes.**

Here's what we are talking about. **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17**

**To be new, one needs to be transformed from the inside out. It's not cleaned up or painted on the outside, only to be dead inside.**

**Being made new, or "renewal," is an event and a process.**

**We are made new when we allow Jesus to take our sin and our lives for himself. That is a decision one makes to reorient their life toward Jesus. We align everything with what Jesus wants. From that point on, we are new as we relate to God. He looks at you and he sees Jesus at the center.**

**But, we are also being made new, that's a process. <sup>21</sup> Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, <sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. <sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:21-24**

**Notice that I need to throw off the old and put on the new. That is my part. But it is The Holy Spirit that does the making new or renewing. It makes us new from the inside out, where our thoughts and attitudes come from. Paul also calls it the "renewing of your mind."**

**This is a process whereby the Holy Spirit transforms us, or makes us new. New means progressively more and more like Jesus, the ultimate example of new creation. This brings us right back to the resurrection. Jesus died and came out of the grave just like new. Oh, there were some scars, but those were healed, and he was renewed.**

**<sup>3</sup> Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. <sup>4</sup> But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and**

**new life through the Holy Spirit. <sup>6</sup> He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. <sup>7</sup> Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.**  
Titus 3-7

**We get a new life because of the Holy Spirit that was sent as the presence of the risen Christ. No longer was he confined to a body, but now his body is all of us. It is this Holy Spirit who gives us new life with new priorities, new values, and new goals. We have a completely new orientation. Jesus' resurrection isn't a sign that God wants to tweak what we are. He makes us new. A new creation.**

**Last week at our baptismal service, you saw and heard stories of people who have been made new by trusting in Jesus and are being made new by His Spirit. AnnMarie told her story of being transformed from someone who feared God to someone who is in relationship with God and allowing His Spirit to renew her. You heard Lisa's story of hurt and anger being changed to a willingness to share her story of healing and restoring.**

**Jesus' resurrection still announces good news because it proclaims that death no longer gets the last word and that we are being made a new creation through Jesus' Spirit. Jesus' resurrection announces good news because...It is the beginning not the finish line.**

**Think about how ridiculous it would look if the runners moved up to the line and put their feet in the blocks. They pensively wait for the gun to sound. As it sounds, they lunge forward onto the track and begin celebrating.**

**Why train if the starting line is the finish line. You can eat burgers, pizza, and doughnuts, smoke, drink like a fish and it won't matter. And is there really anything worth celebrating because there was no effort, no trusting, no risking.**

**This is the problem with a proclamation of good news, or gospel, that only deals with forgiveness and makes following optional. That kind of gospel makes praying a prayer where some spiritual facts about God are**

**agreed upon the finish line. Now we just wait and try not to sin too much until we die, or Jesus comes back, and we get to go to heaven.**

**When getting saved or accepting Jesus as your personal savior is the finish line, it devalues all that happens here on earth. This world is a sinking ship that we are to get as many off of it before it sinks as possible.**

**There are many problems with mixing up the finish line with the starting line. One of the biggest is that it ignores one of the primary parts of the Good News, or Gospel, that Jesus taught and lived. That is that Jesus announced the coming of The Kingdom of God. He said that you are seeing the kingdom announced when you see him. The kingdom is the restoration of God's loving rule or authority over all things. Things are being put right as they were in the beginning. It is "on earth as it is in heaven" where God's rule is unchallenged.**

**If Jesus initiated it when he was here on earth and established it through his life, death and resurrection, then it must be happening now. Things are being put right. There are signs of this restoration all around us. Baptisms, healings, restoring relationships, peace in the midst of struggle, marriages saved, good being brought out of evil, life coming out of death. These are all signs of the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.**

**The kingdom of God is a present reality, future hope! It is coming, being restored right now, but when he returns, it will be completed. Sin and death will be no more. All will be put right, justice will be served and all who are trusting in God's ability to do these things through Christ, will live forever in this new kingdom, this new heaven and earth, this new creation!**

**That all being true means that today is a new beginning. Any moment where we are still taking breath in and letting it back out again can be a new beginning.**

**What would be different for you leaving this room today, if you really believed that because of Jesus' resurrection you could begin again. You**

could start over. He would allow it. Not only allow it to be, but graciously, joyously, looking forward to it.

**What do I do about that today?** I'm stuck here where **I fear death, don't feel new, and can't imagine being at the beginning of something amazing.** This kind of news, demands that we do something. We need to make...A reasonable response to this Good News.

**What response does Jesus ask for to the good news that he is Christ the King establishing God's Kingdom through his death and resurrection?**

<sup>14</sup> Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. <sup>15</sup> "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! **Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!**"

<sup>16</sup> One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. <sup>17</sup> Jesus called out to them, "**Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!**" <sup>18</sup> And they left their nets at once and followed him. Mark 1:14-18

These three responses aren't set in any particular sequence. We just can't leave any of them out.

- Repent...this is to change direction, or an about face.
- Believe...this is not the agreement about some spiritual facts, it is to put your trust in Jesus. It's belief that leads to action.
- Follow...obedience, not a cute metaphor for life.

**This is the way to begin a relationship with God through Jesus. It is also a pattern of life for those who have already put their trust in Jesus and desire to be his disciples.**

**We are going to pray together through this response of repent, believe, and follow. After we pray, I'm going to ask anyone who wants to affirm that prayer, or put a stamp, or even exclamation point on it, to come forward and be anointed. This is a symbol of the aroma that came out of the empty tomb when those ladies and later, the disciples, entered it. It was the aroma of frankincense and other spices used for embalming Jesus' body. This aroma used to signal death, but now it signals life. The aroma was there, but the body wasn't. You'll have that aroma that will**



linger for next few hours, reminding you about your commitment to a reasonable response to the announcement of Good News.

**Let's pray:** We pray asking God to give us the courage to live in repentance by walking away from whatever he is telling us is not what he wants for us. Picture your next step in the wrong direction where your foot digs into the dirt, causing your momentum to stop. Go ahead, push your foot into the carpet like you mean it. Then you pivot and head in the opposite direction toward Jesus and whatever he has which you can't yet see. This brings us to believing or putting your trust in Jesus. Open your hands and face your palms to the sky. Say, "Jesus I trust you, help me to trust you, I believe, help my unbelief." Now Jesus, help me to learn how to follow you. How to hear your voice in your word, the Bible, and in my conscience, that warns me, and through other believers. I give my allegiance to you above all others and commit to follow you no matter the cost. Amen

If you want to receive this anointing, simply move into the aisle and come forward.

Now a prayer of blessing on all of us. "May we experience the kingdom of God being restored through the same power that raised Jesus from the grave to new life. That same power that is at work in people like us who have trusted in Jesus making us new. Amen"

Let's affirm together what this good news, or gospel, is all about. If you are new, you may not have heard this before, but we have written a definition of the gospel in story form. Let's read this together.

If you responded to the good news today by repenting, believing, and a commitment to follow for the first time, I'd love for you to come tell me. I'll remain up front.

Here's some good news, a sign of the kingdom. It's restoration in Sanford. Within two weeks, we will Announce opening of Cultivate in Sanford! The flood waters have long since receded, and God is moving into downtown Sanford.

Now let us proclaim loudly this ancient statement in the church. I will say, **"He is risen."** You will with enthusiasm shout, **"He is risen indeed."**