

“CHRISTIANITY IS UNIQUE”

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Luke 24:1-7 Psalm 55:1-11

On the first day of the week very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they entered, they did not find the body of Jesus. While the women were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

He is not here; he is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Gaililee: He said, the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central fact of Christian history and faith. On this fact, the Christian Church is built. Without it, there would be no foundation for the Christian church today.

Jesus’ resurrection is unique. Other religions have strong ethical systems, concepts about paradise and various holy scriptures.

Only Christianity has a God who became human, literally died for his people and was raised again in power and glory to rule his church forever.

Why is the resurrection so important? (Ref: Study Bible New International Version) There are several reasons. (1) Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know that the kingdom of heaven has broken into earth's history. Our world is now headed for redemption, not disaster. God's mighty power is at work destroying sin, creating new lives, and preparing us for Jesus' second coming. (2) Because of the resurrection, we know that death has been conquered and we too will be raised from the dead to live forever with Christ. (3) The resurrection gives authority to the church's witness in the world. Look at the early evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts: the apostles' most important proclamation is that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. (4) The resurrection gives meaning to the church's regular feast of the Lord's Supper. Like the disciples On the Emmaus Road we break bread with our risen Lord, who comes in power to save us. (5) The resurrection helps us to find meaning even in great tragedy. No matter what happens to us as we walk with the Lord the resurrection gives us hope for the future. (6) The resurrection assures us that Christ is alive and ruling his kingdom. He is not legend; he is alive and real. And finally (7) God's power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us so that we can live for him in a sinner's world. Shortly after the resurrection two of his followers decided to go out of Jerusalem to a city called Emmaus. This was about a 7 miles walk. As they were walking from Jerusalem toward the city of Emmaus when a stranger joined them. During dinner in Emmaus Jesus revealed himself to them and he revealed the scriptures to his followers and then Christ disappeared. They immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples the good news that Jesus was alive!

The resurrection is the central foundation of our faith. Understanding and accepting the resurrection is key to living a life of faith and trust. There are times when we are in anguish because we are facing trouble. It could be a grudge of hate

against you in the work place, it could be financial problems, it could be that you have serious health issues, Your child may not be living the life you want for them, it could be the loss of a spouse or a good friend. We often just want to be like David in Psalm 55-1-11 and beg God for the wings of a dove so he could fly away and live in the wilderness to escape trouble.

However, the Lord does not call us to flee but to live faithfully. We are not to run, but stand. Do not take the coward's road, but find courage in God. He sent his son to us to teach us what God wants. He taught us to love one another and to love a God who will sustain us. God wants us to persist without exception. He wants us to love him and trust him.

Several years ago I was told I had wet macular degeneration. I was told I would have to have injections in my eye for two years. I was told by a Wilmer Eye Institute Physician that I might go blind. I felt like I could not breathe. I had the injection and made an appointment to return to the clinic. Pastor DD and I were going to the Annual Conference that year. By the time we traveled to Baltimore, my sight was completely obscured in my left eye. I prayed and I knew that whatever happened I could handle it with God's help. I turned my face upward toward heaven and I said God, I have done all that I can. I have seen the best doctors and prayed with my pastor. I give it up Lord. I give it up to you, thy will be done. So Pastor and I went to the Conference Auditorium and there were about 3000 people there, singing beautiful hymns. We were singing *I SURRENDER ALL*, and I am not a good singer but I was singing my lungs out and I had such joy in my heart. Joy like I had never known. The love of God filled me completely. Suddenly, the curtain over my eye began to recede. I could see! I turned to the Pastor and I said through a lot of tears, I CAN SEE! I grabbed the Pastor and

kissed her on top of her head and she just smiled as though she already knew. I knew I could see and that I had been touched by God but I was in shock and I was crying. The man next to me asked what happened and I told him. The Pastor and I sat together with me softly crying tears of joy, when the man returned and said the Bishop summoned us. We both shrank back and the Pastor said, I'm not going, the gentleman said you have both been summoned by the Bishop. So we went. I went up the stairs to the stage and I looked behind me and my Pastor stayed at the bottom. I told my story, tears, sobbing as I told the story . I later learned someone took my picture, red nose, teary eyes and all and published it in the UM magazine all over the conference. The Bishop praised God for the healing. I was still in shock. Beginning to doubt about what had happened. So I returned to the doctor,taking a catholic friend with me as a witness. The doctor was shocked. She had never seen the injection work so well, and I was 100% healed. I asked if she had ever seen a healing so quickly and I described the curtain over my eye being pulled back until it was no longer there. She said no it does not work like that, it is gradual. At that point I knew what I already felt, I knew for sure that God had healed me and I felt somewhat ashamed that I had doubted Gods healing powers. Pastor DD said, Marge Miracles happen everyday in everyday life. They don't happen just in the bible. So I say to you that He is there for you waiting patiently. He wants us to love him, love one another and trust him. He is our resurrected Lord.