

Christ the Redeemer



Easter is here! Christ is alive! He greets the dawn. Jesus Greets the dawn of every new day as the Lord Life.

Here's what Jesus said... *"I AM the resurrection, and I AM life itself... whoever believes in me, though they die, yet shall they live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die..."*

Jesus is the Lord of life – he IS life. To trust in him is to live. Because he has risen from the dead, because he reigns forever at the right hand of the Father, because he sent the Spirit to bring his ongoing life into the lives of those who believe in him, because of all this -- we can join him in greeting the dawn of each new day... Just as he does in this photograph

Rio

I love this photo – it's of Christ The Redeemer in Rio. In my mind it represents what Easter means. Because Christ lives and reigns, all of life is redeemed by God.

Redeemed. What does that mean? We use it mainly regarding shopping – as in, *"I'm redeeming this coupon for 20% off at Amazon..."*.

It's means to buy something. But the word itself actually goes a little deeper. Its root comes from buying slaves in the slave market in ancient Rome and Greece and then setting them free. To redeem means to pay the cost of a human being in

order to free them from what bound them in the past. *It means to pay for their life and to give them their freedom.*

Christ is our redeemer in THAT way – he paid the cost of your life with his life to set us free from whatever has bound us – no matter what it is. Because Christ is alive, everything he did in his life and everything he did on the cross is sealed – is completed – becomes REAL – is transferred from Him to us...

Floating Statues

There's just one problem with this photo. Jesus is a STATUE. Sometimes I wonder if we don't treat the resurrection as though Jesus really IS sort of like a statue. We believe in the resurrection, but our daily faith is more like a transaction with a distant invisible God rather than a relationship with the living Lord.

Click URL to watch video.
(Only the first 1½ min. were shown.)

In his book, *The Jesus I never Knew*, Philip Yancey recounts a scene from a movie by the Italian director Fellini. The clip you are about to see begins with a helicopter, carrying something underneath it on a long cable. Since you can't quite tell what it is, I'll fill you in – it's a statue of Jesus. (<https://youtu.be/uo84caBoToQ>).

Let me interpret this scene a little. The helicopter moves a statue of Jesus toward Rome. There Jesus is, lifeless, frozen in time, dangling on a rope beneath the helicopter, suspended, floating above our world, but never connecting with anything or anyone. First, they fly above ancient ruins – Jesus comes out of nowhere from the ancient world. Then, they fly over modern apartments – the people on the ground wave and say “It's Jesus! Where are they taking him?” But That's all that happens. The point is clear – to so many, Jesus is little more than an ancient curiosity, he isn't real. He floats above life. Never connects personally with anyone, never affects actual life in any way.

Knowing God

BUT... The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead means that Jesus **is** among us and with us – that Jesus **is** present in this life with HIS life -- coursing in and through us. He's not some statue, floating above the earth, out of touch, never connecting with our work, our struggles, our families, our concerns, or the issues of the day. He is alive and working in all of it. Every day.

The resurrection means that Christ has redeemed life itself, not just our lives. He has bought us out of whatever has bound us and we are free for living His life in the present world as well as eternity.

That's why Jesus said, "*I AM the resurrection and I AM life itself... If you die? You shall live. And if you are alive? You shall never really die...*"

Eternal Life

What he's talking about is *eternal life*. But what IS that? I always used to think that eternal life was what happened when you die and that Jesus, sort of like that floating statue, was raised from the dead so I could go to heaven when I die and THEN I'd have eternal life!

But clearly, what Jesus is saying here is that eternal life is now – that the resurrection is as much for this life as the next!

He even defined what eternal life is later in John, when he said, "*And THIS is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*"

Eternal life is to know God by knowing Jesus – who is alive. In other words, eternal life is not about an expanse of greater time or place, it's all about a relationship of knowing God.

The men who went on the retreat will recall that John MacMurray reminded us of this in his talks. *Eternal life is knowing God.* The problem with the world is that people don't know God. When we don't know God personally and don't know that we are KNOWN BY God, that's when we fail and stumble and mess things up and everything goes haywire.

This doesn't mean knowing ABOUT God, but personally richly, directly, knowing Him who knows us better than we know ourselves.

George...

Here's an example of what I mean. (again, from John McMurray on the retreat...). Let's take someone like George Washington. He's one of my favorite historical figures from the past. My Dad was a history teacher. I've been reading books and vignettes about him since I was a kid. We went to Mt. Vernon when I was in the first grade and my interest has never waned from that time 'til now. When Laurel and I lived in Princeton, our apartment was less than a hundred yards from where Washington marched through for the Battle of Princeton, which turned the tide of the first year of the Revolutionary War in the favor of America.

If you study and read, you can know a lot about George Washington. You can get to a point where you know so much about him that you feel you almost know

him – you understand his character, his moods, his thoughts, his convictions. What made him tick. You can gain a sense of the PERSON. Got it?

But here's the thing. No matter how hard you try or how much you study, you will never KNOW George Washington. You'll only know about him.

Jesus

But with Jesus, *because he is alive and present in the world*, you CAN know Jesus. Personally. You CAN have a direct, personal, living relationship with Jesus himself, this very day.

Now, it's also true that you can know all kinds of things about Jesus but NOT know him personally. There are all kinds of experts on Jesus who don't know him personally. To them, he's a figure from the past, but they don't ever know **him**.

There are so many others who aren't experts! They don't know much about ancient history or languages or religious stuff.

But JESUS... they *know*. They trust Him, they talk with Him, they walk with Him, they pray in Him, they serve Him, they KNOW Him!

You can't get to know a person you never met who's dead. You CAN get to know a person who died and broke through death to the other side of eternal life and lives among us now. Jesus is the only one who's done all that.

Mary

How do we know? We know because of the reliable witness of those who met him after they saw him dead. *Especially Mary Magdelene.*



On Sunday, Mary went to the garden where she thought Jesus laid in the Tomb. She was there to anoint his dead body with spices, since they hadn't had time to do it in the rush to bury him before the beginning of the Sabbath 3 days before.

The tomb was open! Alarmed, she looked inside. No body! She thought it had been stolen. She turned around. A man was there. In her tears she couldn't see who it was. *"Where have you taken Him?"*

Then one little word was spoken that connected Mary – and all of us -- with eternal life, ***MARY***.

It wasn't a word of explanation, or definition, or theology. It was a *name*. It was HER name. *Mary*. Jesus was calling her by *name*... risen and full of life eternal. In that moment, Mary knew that she was known and that knowing Him is life eternal.

Pastor Geordie shared an insight this week in our staff devotions that really helped me on all this. That God knows our name is an obvious fact. Like that fact that he numbers the hair on our heads. (A job that gets easier for some of us as we get a little older...). Yes – God knows everything. That's a fact. But that God knows our name and that Jesus SPEAKS it here lets us know that God *desires* to know us, that God *WANTS* to love us and for us to experience that love in Christ. It's not just fact, it's why Jesus came and died and rose again – to NAME us – directly and personally. To redeem us.

When Jesus speaks Mary's name, Jesus isn't floating above her life like a statue. His feet are firmly planted in the earth, he looks like any other man, so much so that Mary takes him for a gardener at work around the cemetery.

Jesus goes where SHE is, he doesn't make himself hard to find, and he makes himself known to her first, so that she can respond in kind.

Did you notice? They are in a garden. Let me repeat something I mentioned last week. Radical things happen in gardens in the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose to run away from God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus chose to go to the cross – thus reversing the effect of Adam and Eve's rebellion. In this Garden, Jesus first appeared in his risen, eternal life to another human being.

Jesus was in that Garden as the sun came up, so he could greet the dawn of a new day. The first day of life eternal in this life and the next. I invite you today to hear him speaking YOUR name...