

## *Raised With Christ*

Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10  
Lewinsville Presbyterian Church  
Easter Sunday – April 9, 2023  
The Rev. Dr. Scott Ramsey

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

Friends, the news of this day, the good news that we are meant to take into our hearts, into our minds, into our bodies, and into our souls, is that Jesus Christ has overcome sin and death and the grave, and therefore, we do not need to be afraid – of anything, or anyone, anymore.

The great message of Easter, which is the great message of the gospel, is, “*You do not need to be afraid.*” From the beginning of the Bible until the end, the core proclamation of biblical faith is that God is graciously sovereign over all that is – God created it, God redeems it, and God sustains it – God is sovereign over all that is.

And because *God* is sovereign, that means that nothing else is. Not any of the other forces or powers that pretend to be sovereign, or that would like us to believe that they are sovereign, or that we have been led to believe that we can’t live without them – think about an addiction, or a bully, or money, or popularity, or approval, or a relationship – anything that the human heart can be led to think it can’t live without. By raising Jesus from the dead, God demonstrated that not even death itself needs to be feared, because not even death can stop the love and the power of God. God is with us, all the way through. Nothing can change that.

This past week, though, I came to a realization about all of this that has unsettled me a bit – and when we get unsettled, we may not like that feeling, but oh my, it is a precious thing to be unsettled, for that means that God’s got an opening, and God might actually get through to us, when we’re not quite so sure of ourselves. This realization has opened up a deeper level to this good news that I want to share with you, in case you’re anything like me.

I realized this past week that when I have heard the news that God is with me in my life, I have welcomed that news, but I have wanted God to be in my life *on my terms*. I’ve wanted the “no fear” part, but not the “let your life be changed” part. I haven’t wanted to give anything up. I’ve wanted the “no fear” part, but I have not really been ready to let go of the things I hold so tightly. I have wanted to keep all those things, and I’ve wanted God to help make my life come out the way I want it to. I have wanted the risen Christ in my life, but I’ve wanted to hold onto my various pet projects, my way of doing things, my assumptions about how the world operates. All of this runs the risk of making God into something like a giant Add-On to my life, rather

than the One who radically reorganizes and transforms my life into a new creation. I've been treating God like trying to acquire that really big player for my team, someone who will help me fulfill my agenda.

But friends, Easter is not about strengthening our teams. Easter is not about shoring up our old selves, our false selves, our selves that try to find success and security on our own. Easter is about the death of the old self and the raising of the new self in Christ.

Colossians 3:1 says, "Since you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at God's right hand." But before it says that, it says in Colossians 2:20, "Since you died with Christ to the way the world thinks and acts, why do you submit to rules and regulations as though you were living according to the world?" In order for us to fully embrace and embody the risen life of Christ in our daily lives, we need to die to our old selves, our false selves, our selves that want to control the outcomes, that assume we have to make it apart from God. The new life of Easter only follows the crucifixion of Good Friday.

God has a new life for us, it is a risen life, it is a life of grace and forgiveness, a life of righteousness and truth, a life of generosity and assertiveness, and as we let go of our tight, frantic grip on control of our lives, as we allow that old self, that false self, to be crucified with Christ, the new life of the risen Christ will flow through us and in us. This new life – the life of forgiveness, honesty, selfless courage, being at peace in the midst of whatever is going on – these are *not* things for us to summon up the willpower to do on our own. They're not things we have to do on our own. We can't do them on our own. These are gifts that Christ that is giving us, from deep within ourselves. Your new life is already hidden with Christ in God.

The promise of Easter is that we do not need to live our lives in fear. *But not only that.* The promise of Easter is also that you can live a new life, beginning today. The old life has already been crucified with Christ. And our new lives of courage, mercy, hopefulness, neighborly generosity – those new lives are already hidden with Christ in God, waiting to be revealed.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!