

Sermon 2010 Resurrection of Our Lord  
Text: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26  
Theme: "Christ Is Risen! So What?"

Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

So what?

The so what is the important part of the whole equation. The so what is the part that so many Christians confess but then immediately forget. We confess that because Christ died on the cross and suffered the torments of hell, we shall never die. And because he rose from the dead, we shall rise too and live in eternity with him and with all who were in faith whom we have lost to physical death.

But go to most wakes and what do you hear?

"It is so unfair; he was just getting his life together."

"I am so sad that she won't get to see her grandchildren grow up."

"He was such a great guy. Everyone loved him. Why did God have to take him instead of some creep who abused kids or robbed people or something?"

You have a great life on earth. You are successful and well loved and everything goes your way. So what? You still end up in a satin lined box surrounded by flowers and everything you thought you were is over. That is why St. Paul says,

“If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

We could have been out having all kinds of fun at the expense of other people instead of living a pious, holy life. If Jesus is just for this life, I got ripped off. I want a refund of all the time I have spent in worship and all the money I have given to the Church! But Jesus is not just for this life. In fact, Jesus is not even primarily for this life. That’s the big SO WHAT?!

We talk about heaven and paradise and how wonderful it will be but do we live as though we believe it? See the reality of the Jesus’ resurrection has implications for us. He said he would die on the cross and he did. He said he would rise from the dead and he did. He said we too will rise from the dead and we will and that significantly changes our life on earth! That fact answers some important questions for us.

Many of us carry anger and resentment in our hearts. We don't like the feeling of being angry all the time but as we know, anger is a masking emotion for hurt. When someone hurts us, we get angry because showing hurt would be vulnerable. We live in a broken world and we cannot avoid being hurt anymore that you can walk barefoot on broken glass and expect not to get cut. Sooner or later, you will be cut. So, when someone has cut you, how do you find it in your heart to forgive that person who has done real harm to you or your family?

Many of us carry shame and humiliation with us wherever we go. We don't like feeling that shame. Sometimes it is real shame over some dumb choice we made that hurt people or with which we hurt ourselves. Sometimes it is imagined guilt and shame that someone else has dumped on us but is not really ours to carry. We want to unload that horrible burden but how? How do you just move on from some horrible choice? How do you get out from under tons of guilt? That's where the "so what?" comes in.

First off, we need to relax a little. So many of us live our lives like my sister visits Disneyland. She can only afford to go for a couple of days, but she's too cheap to pay good money and then miss something. So a couple of days at Disneyland with her can make a Marine cry. It is not a vacation. It is a battle plan and that park will be conquered. She swaggers through the gates with a map in one hand and a watch in the other and all that is missing is a cigar chomped in the corner of her mouth. That is not how God intends for us to live this life.

We are not on a time clock here. Our days are not running out. The moment that Jesus burst out of that tomb, he bought eternal life for all of us. We inherited that eternal life when Baptismal waters flowed over our heads and washed us clean of our sin. Eternal life does not begin when we die. It began the day we were Baptized. We are living eternally RIGHT NOW, so take a deep breath and relax for heaven's sake; you're not on the clock. Each day is a new gift, a new adventure, a new learning experience. We have the Word of God to guide us and empower us. We have the waters of baptism that continue washing us and

we have the body and blood of Christ to nourish and strengthen us. ENJOY! That is the so what. He is risen and you are eternal!

In addition to relaxing a little, try reorganizing your reality. A life full of unattained goals and various kinds of losses is NOT REAL LIFE. That's a poor reflection of life; a reflection that is muddied by sin and darkened by Satan. We know that things go askew in this life. There are going to be trials along the way.

I am reminded of my Uncle Elbert's farm in March. When we had been out in the north 40, it was a long, cold, usually wet walk back to the house. We would come out of the tree break between fields and we had one last field to cross before getting home. It was evening and the sun was going down and everything felt damp and cold and a little uneasy. When you trudge through a wet, open field, the chances of getting some mud on you are high. In fact, in a wet open field where cattle are run, there's a pretty good chance of getting something worse than mud on you.

But picture a beautiful, warm farmhouse on the other side of that field and you can see smoke coming out of the chimney and

you can smell fresh bread baking and you know that even though you are cold and wet and muddy at the moment – you can see what awaits you on the other side of that field.

That is our life on earth folks. Our Lord is risen and because he is risen, we are right now on our way to the warm, beautiful place he has prepared for us. That is great in and of itself but it is even greater because it changes the journey. As we journey across this last field, we don't have to worry about who is first and who is last. We don't have to worry about who did more work than whom. We don't have to hold grudges or feel shame because the prize is in sight and all of that stuff is over and done with. Even though we are still wet and cold, we can find some joy in the journey because we know it will all be over soon. That is the so what!

Christ is risen! So what? So we can slow down and enjoy our lives together. So we can let go of hurt and so also let go of anger. So we can find joy in all the little things and quit worrying about the stuff that doesn't happen. So what? So it is a whole different world for us. If you like being angry and grouching and

groaning about the economy, and your spouse and your kids and healthcare and the price of gasoline – hey knock yourself out, God has given us the freedom to be as contrary and curmudgeonly as we like. But, try using the power of your Baptism to let go of hurt. Try really listening to the Word of God for answers to all your challenges. Try filling up on the body and blood of Christ and relying on that power to fill you with joy and peace. That's the so what. And it is a far, far better way to live. AMEN. CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!