

“He is Risen!” “He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!” Just a week ago, we celebrated my absolute favorite day of the year, Easter Sunday. The joy of the comforting message of the Risen Christ, the beautiful music, the powerful shouts of “He is Risen Indeed!” Even my Facebook newsfeed transformed from a spiteful mess of memes about gun control and politics, to a joyful stream of favorite Easter hymns, empty tombs, and “He is Risen indeed!” statuses. No matter how early I woke up, how far I had to drive to see family, or how many frustrations the day brought, Easter Sunday always fills me with peace. Because Christ is Risen indeed!

But how long do we bask in Easter joy, and cling to Easter peace before our minds shift elsewhere? How would you respond if I shouted “He is Risen!” at your Fourth of July barbecue? “Pastor...Easter was 3 months ago! Here, eat a brat.” Or if I called you at 2am, proclaiming, “He is Risen!” (Hang-up click.)

Be honest. How peaceful was your Easter Monday? Although I fell asleep Sunday night in Easter peace, admittedly I woke up in Easter Monday crabbiness. I discovered my daughter had a double ear infection; heard we were about to get buried in an April snowstorm. I was tired. Fresh off a hectic Holy Week, yet walking back to church to write another sermon. 24 hours removed from Easter joy, I was feeling very little peace. Sighing, I dropped into my desk chair. But then I noticed the Easter Sunday bulletin still on my desk, and for the first time that day, I smiled. I grabbed a Sharpie, and wrote on a notepad, “He is Risen Indeed!” You see, Jesus is still risen indeed on Easter Monday. Jesus is still risen indeed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July or New Years’ Day. 24/7, 365, Christ is Risen Indeed. It’s my prayer today that God help each of us to be **Living with “He Is Risen Indeed” Peace.**

In our sermon text, the Apostle Paul had plenty of reasons to not feel at peace, reasons much different than a hectic Holy Week.

Paul, formerly Saul, was once one of the most ardent persecutors of the Christian church. He sought peace in attempting to eradicate the Christian sect which followed the crucified Jesus. That is, until Jesus himself helped Saul realize that Christ was risen indeed.

Jesus brought Paul to faith, and sent him to spread the good news of the risen Savior to the world. But Paul’s ministry was far from peaceful. Six times, Paul narrowly escaped murder attempts, certainly backing up his claim, **“But I have had God’s help to this very day.”** Because he knew the Risen Lord was with him, Paul could have peace.

And yet here Paul was, on trial before two rulers-- King Herod Agrippa, the king of Judea, whose father had martyred the Apostle James and imprisoned Peter; and Festus, the governor of Judea. After **“the Jews seized [him] in the temple courts and tried to kill [him]”** Paul had stood trial, been under house arrest, and waited for something to happen for 2 years.

Paul had repeatedly escaped death, received numerous beatings, been imprisoned countless times, and was now once again on trial because of Jesus. How could Paul keep going?

Almost every single one of Paul’s “sermons” recorded in the book of Acts includes a common theme: The resurrection of Jesus. Paul summarized his message to Festus and Agrippa: **“The Christ would suffer and as the first to rise from the dead would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”** The heart of Paul’s message was also the reason he could live in peace, in the face of any trouble or trial: Christ is risen indeed!

But why did that give Paul peace? Yes, Jesus was risen. But Paul was still on trial. He almost certainly would die because of his message of the Risen Savior. How can someone have peace in that?

Casual observers of this courtroom scene would obviously peg Festus and Agrippa, the royals of Judea, as the ones who possessed peace, not Paul, the prisoner for Christ. Festus and Agrippa had all the power and authority. They were totally in control of the circumstances that could make their lives peaceful. But not Paul, the loser in chains, whose martyrdom was just a decree away.

And certainly, that's how people think about peace today, too. That peace is found in things we can control. We want something we can tap into any time we want to feel at peace. We want a button we can press that dispenses "peace" every time we need it.

I can control my money—budgeting wisely, working more hours, earning a raise—convinced that "if I'm financially secure, I'll have peace." I can control my status and power—working my way up the ladder, making connections with important people, establishing a reputation—convinced that "If I'm doing something important, I'll have peace." I can control my emotions—numbing the bad feelings with a bottle, a joint, a Netflix binge, or a one-night stand—convinced that, "If I can numb the bad feelings, I'll have peace." I can control my opportunities to escape the world—soaking up the sun on a beach, going on vacation, going to sleep—convinced that "If I can just escape the world's problems for a bit, I'll have peace." I can control the people I surround myself with—spending time with my family and my friends—convinced that "If I'm with people I love, I'll have peace."

But do you see the problem with each of these sources of earthly peace? They're all temporary. One bad investment sends my nest egg crashing down. Even if I'm financially stable my whole life, when I die, it's gone. Position and power are temporary, and fame is fleeting. Would you know about governor Festus or King Agrippa without this account? Eventually the buzz, the high, and the pleasure wear off, and the bad feelings return, now enhanced with guilt. The vacation always ends. The alarm always goes off. Friends and family move away or pass away, leaving us with memories—which eventually fade away.

As much as people want one, there's no peace-dispensing button we can press. It's impossible to find lasting peace from earthly things, because nothing on earth lasts forever. To find lasting peace, we need something eternal.

And that's why the reality of peace is so different from appearance. Festus and Agrippa, rulers with temporary power, eventually died and became forgotten names of history. But Paul, the prisoner for Christ, possessed true peace, because he was living with "He is Risen Indeed" peace; peace from a risen, eternal Savior.

And just by observing Paul, we can see what peace in the resurrection looks like. Complete confidence in God's plan. Complete contentment with his station in life. His attitude and actions exuded peace, because Christ's resurrection gave him peace in four different areas. And when our peace comes from the Risen Savior, that's our peace too!

The Risen Christ gives 1.) Peace from doubts. We can trust in the resurrection, because as Paul told Agrippa, **"It was not done in a corner."** After Christ rose, he appeared to hundreds of people. Many were still alive during Paul's ministry. So Paul could invite the skeptics, "Don't believe me? Go talk to one of the other hundreds of eyewitnesses!" As an eyewitness himself, Paul too had perfect peace from any doubt. And it's not like this was a new message. Paul was **"saying nothing beyond what Moses and the Prophets said would happen."** Christ crucified and risen had been God's plan from the very beginning.

2.) Christ's resurrection gives peace from guilt. A former persecutor of Christ, Paul had plenty of guilt. And yet, as he wrote in Romans, "**[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**" Although we and Paul are guilt-ridden sinners, Christ's resurrection assures us that our sins are paid in full. Guilt is gone.

3.) Christ's resurrection gives peace in life's troubles. Paul knew he would probably die for preaching the Risen Christ. And yet he had peace in life's troubles, because he knew his Risen Savior was in full control. We might not be in control of the things that can give us lasting peace, but Jesus, who defeated death, has complete control over everything. And as Paul wrote, "**In all things, God works for the good of those who love him.**"

And finally, 4.) Christ's resurrection gives peace for eternity. As he wrote to the Corinthians in our Epistle lesson, "**Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep...for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**" Because Christ is risen indeed, we have the assurance of eternal life, and that we too will rise at Judgment Day! We will be raised with a perfect, glorified body. Nothing in this world can steal that peace, because today, tomorrow, next week, next year, next millennium, Christ is still risen indeed!

I take back what I said earlier about there not being a button you can press to distribute peace. Although there isn't really a button to press, there is something you can turn to for peace whenever you face something troubling. The promise that fills us with Easter Sunday peace, "Christ is risen indeed!"

And so my challenge for you today is to find something that will help remind you to be filled with that promise of peace every day. I wrote it in Sharpie on a piece of paper, and hung it in my office. What can you do?

Write "He is risen indeed" with a dry-erase marker on your bathroom mirror. Make "He is risen indeed" the background on your smartphone, or your computer. Write it on a sticky note and put it on the dashboard in your car. Tattoo it on your forearm, I don't really care! But wherever you face things that try to steal your peace, find a way to keep that promise of Easter peace before you. Daily remind yourself why you can live with "He is Risen indeed" peace. At your Fourth of July barbeque; if I call you at 2am; during a time of heartbreaking sorrow; or as your earthly life draws to its close. Every day has Easter Sunday peace. "He is Risen!" He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!"