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***Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is in vain." (1 Cor. 15:14)

JESUS CHRIST's resurrection is both a matter of faith and an historical reality. The witness of more than five hundred individuals, in addition to that of the Apostles themselves, recorded not just in Scripture but in the historic records of the Roman Empire, testify that the Resurrection is fact not myth. What is more, belief in the reality of Christ's Resurrection did not come from the Apostles' faith or even eyewitness; their faith came from the truth of the Resurrection. It was not just some inner mystical experience of a few followers but a dramatic life-altering change which transformed a small band of frightened demoralized disciples into bold, fearless, faithful Apostles and Evangelists. So much so that today there are over 2.6 billion Christians in every corner of the earth.

The testimony and witness of those who were privileged to see and hear and touch the risen Lord is living proof of this profound event in the history of the world and, most especially, in the lives of men and women through countless generations. No hallucination or lie or hoax has ever had such power to transform lives; or to give such love, joy, peace, hope, and meaning to billions of people for over two thousand years. The experience of the Resurrection changed soft, cowardly hearts into hard, courageous ones; and converted hard, cruel rulers, and willful sinners, to believe in the One Who is Love Incarnate – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing more concretely and conclusively proves Christ's divinity than His Resurrection. None but God could conquer death; and none but God can overcome sin and pardon the sinner. We cannot be saved by a dead Saviour nor by an earth-bound Jesus – a man merely of historic importance. The difference the Resurrection makes is nothing less than the promise of salvation and the hope of glory.

Even more, the personal and practical importance of the Resurrection is not to be found in a past event but in the present reality: Jesus Christ *is* risen! We can visit the graves and tombs and resting places of those who have gone before us. But as the women stood before the tomb of Christ, they heard the dramatic words of the Angel: "He is not here; He has risen." (*Luke 24:5*)

Jesus is not to be found in the dead past but in the living present. He is not among those 'whom we have loved and lost awhile' but is present with us in each and every moment. He promised: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of time." (*Matt. 28:20*) The angel's proclamation to the grieving women standing before the empty tomb continually poses to us the eternal question of faith in Jesus Christ: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

In His resurrection, Jesus promises life over death, eternity over oblivion, salvation over damnation. And the new life promised is not a continuation of our earthly struggles, even with its joys and personal triumphs. It is everlasting, joyous. It is life with more love, more fulfillment, more promise than we could ever hope for or imagine. It is our heart's desire lived out in the very presence of God amidst the company of Heaven. Jesus promised: "Because I live, you will live also."

You and I, as Christians, walk with the Risen Lord each day, and He with us. In our walk with Jesus, we know the power of His presence in our lives – power which is transforming, healing, forgiving, life-giving, and love-filling.

As we hear in the Easter Gospel, when Mary Magdalene turned her back on the grave and looked on Jesus, it was then that she beheld her risen Lord. So, it is for each one of us. When we turn our backs on sin; when we turn away from the culture of death which pervades our modern society; when we stop looking down at our own feet and start looking upward to Jesus, then we too are transformed; we too behold our Risen Lord.

Life was never the same for the holy women, the Apostles, and the other disciples who, on that first Easter morning, stood before the empty tomb and beheld their risen Lord.

We are not the same; for we have come to know Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Even amid suffering, doubts, questions, and the daily struggles we face in merely living, we still profess with all our hearts the reality of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. It is the hallmark of our faith; it is the promise of our salvation.

May the peace of God, the love of Christ, and the power of the Resurrection, be yours this Easter Day, and for evermore.

+Shane
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