

Easter's Glorious Tidings

by J. Glyn Owen

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical event that gives us hope for the future and reminds us that death is not the end, but rather a transition to eternal life.

Duration: 43:50

Scripture: Acts 24:14, 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, Ephesians 2:6, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 4:14-16, Revelation 1:18

Topics: "Easter"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is alive and can be communicated with. The preacher highlights that this connection with a living Savior validates the past and brings certainty to the future. The sermon also addresses the challenge faced by those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior, as they will be held accountable for their decision. The preacher concludes by discussing the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ and its significance in validating his birth, life, and death, as well as the promises he made to humanity.

Transcript

May I underscore the words of welcome given by Mr Lowe. It's a great joy to have you with us today, especially those who are visiting with us. A number of our own members have had a little respite to go away for the for the vacation, for the short period at any rate.

We miss them, but we rejoice to have those of you who are joining us today. May it be the most glorious Easter day yet for each of us, and particularly the Humberside Brass. It's a joy to have you.

I wish you were here every Lord's Day. We can't very well move Knox over to you, but we'll be very welcome here every Lord's Day. Thank you very, very much to each of you, and to all of you.

Now, contrary to our normal practice, I'm not turning this morning to any one particular passage of scripture, but I just want to think of the glorious fact that we commemorate and celebrate today. And I want to look at one or two aspects of it against a larger canvas than one particular context in scripture. The event we celebrate is the physical and corporeal resurrection to life of the crucified, buried Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Now that needs repeating. We are remembering today an event in history, not thinking of a philosophic tenet or the dream of a prophet, but of something that actually happened in history. If the resurrection is

not that, then ultimately it is nothing.

If Christ be not risen, says Paul in writing to the Corinthians, then is our faith vain. You Christians are yet in your sins, and what's more he says, we are liars, we're false witnesses. Because what we bear witness to is nothing short of this, that he did rise from the dead, that he was seen by many, touched by many, handled.

This is the word that John uses in one place. It was a word that was often used of women folk going to buy some material on the market or in the shops. And the way you handle your material, you put it between your fingers and you say, well this is silk or this is satin or whatever.

It's that careful handling as if you didn't have sight to see, and you're dependent upon your sense of touch. He was seen. He was touched.

He was handled. He was heard. They sat at meal with him.

They met him in the night. They were with him within the closed doors of a house. They were with him in various circumstances.

Occasionally there was just one, sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes ten, sometimes eleven, sometimes on one occasion at any rate over five hundred at once. And they all were alive when Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians to testify to the fact that they had seen, and they had heard, and they had touched, and they had handled, and they were assured that the Christ who died upon the cross was alive again from the dead. Now as the significance of that event gripped men, and gripped men it did.

Let us make no bones about that. It gripped them. It laid hold upon them.

It mastered them. They said to themselves something like this, if this is true, and it is true, then everything has changed. Life is altogether different.

This was no ordinary person who was nailed to the cross, buried in the tomb, and rose again. And who foretold the whole thing, and behind his own foretelling lay the foretellings of the prophets. And this person is no ordinary person.

His rising again from the dead cast a sheath of light upon the events of his birth, life, and death. And upon the promises that he had made to men during his lifetime. So that when we speak of the resurrection, we do indeed without forcing the issue, often speak of the glorious Easter tidings.

For glorious these tidings are. Now what I want to do very simply this morning is this. I want to bring out three aspects of this message.

The first is the historical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is based on this. On the basis of that the New Testament speaks about the future pending resurrection of all men.

Sinners or saints, black or white, red or brown or yellow or whatever color, cultured or illiterate, yesterday or today. It says that all men will rise from the dead, some to judgment and some to everlasting life. So you see, based on the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, the New Testament announces to men and women everywhere, you're going to rise from the dead.

Death is not the end for you. You may be a believer, you may be a non-believer. You'll go under the sod, but you'll rise again.

To some that is the greatest, the most joyous message. To some it is challenging. Now the third element I want us to notice is this.

There is something in between these two that makes the whole thing not only credible, but inevitable. And that is this. The Christian experience is nothing other than an experience of resurrection.

It is an experience of the spirit of a man, the inner man, the inner you, and the inner me, being brought again from the dead into life. And the cause, the cause, the mainspring that brings that into existence is what Jesus did on the cross and what he does now as the risen ascended Lord. He lives not only as the one who died, but as the one who lives and is alive forevermore.

And out of the abundance of his grace, he is able to raise the spirit of men from the dead. We shall explain that in a few moments. And so you see, every Christian who has experienced this does not only have confidence in the fact that Jesus did rise from the dead because he is benefiting from the fruit of that resurrection.

But he is equally confident that one day he too will rise from the dead and Jesus who is alive forevermore will fulfill his promises. I can't say everything that there is to be said about these three things this morning. But I want to say a few things and may the spirit of God help us to grasp the message that the message may grip us.

First of all we look at the past. The past and the historical basis of the Easter tidings. Jesus Christ our Lord is risen from the dead.

The Easter message is grounded upon the Easter event. Now apart from that, really we have nothing very much different from any other religion to announce. Unless Jesus rose from the dead you see, it means that he was wrong in his view of himself, because he said he would.

Unless Jesus rose from the dead, then the Old Testament is not a reliable guide because it said he would. And the New Testament is not reliable because it said he did. And the church is not reliable because the church is built upon the fact that Jesus rose and is coming again and is today Lord of all.

And you see everything, everything crumbles if Jesus has not risen. It's important then to ask the question, what really do we mean by this? And it is important too, though I can't go into that area this morning. It is important nevertheless to deal with the evidences for the resurrection of our Lord.

Though I can't go in that direction. But what do we mean by the resurrection? What do we mean by the resurrection of Jesus? Let me say two or three negatives and two or three positives. First of all negatively, by the resurrection we do not simply mean the reappearance of a disembodied spirit.

Now I've been to places and a guide has told us in certain, I have certain places in mind at the moment, a guide has told us that so-and-so died here and his or her spirit returns every now and again and haunts the place. Now that's not what we have in the New Testament. It's not anything of that kind.

It's not the reappearance of a disembodied spirit that allegedly belonged to Jesus who is dead. Neither does the resurrection mean the mere perpetuation of a memory until it became a legend and in talking

about the resurrection we're talking about a legend. That is impossible because you see a legend takes ages to develop.

A legend only evolves over the centuries. It takes time for any legend to crystallize and the people further away from the alleged event or events are those who believe it most. But that's not the case with the resurrection.

The very day of the resurrection it was announced in the very streets of Jerusalem where Jesus was murdered, he's risen. You nailed him on the cross. God raised him from the dead.

And the folk who were nearest to the event were the folk who were most vocal in affirming that it had happened. And that's quite contrary to a legend. Neither does it mean the mere perpetuation of a memory.

And I've indicated that. Neither does it, well perhaps I should, should I go any further? Perhaps I should add this one other thing. Neither do we simply mean by resurrection a mere animation of men by an ideal or an idea.

You know people do have ideas that were first taught shall we say in 5th century BC in Greece. And there are some folk who revive them today and they become part of a new ism or of a new philosophy or of a new teaching. And nobody tells you that they were taught 500, 600 years before Christ but they've been they've been kind of raised from the dead.

And they become part and parcel of some new theory or some new philosophy or even a new religion, allegedly new. That's not what we have here. Positively by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ we mean his return from the domain of death in order to resume his actual life functions in the body in which he lived before he was died.

The body and the spirit that were separated at his death were again reunited to begin a new phase in his ongoing ministry. That's the first thing about the resurrection of our Lord. The second is this.

Involved in that resurrection was the transformation of the physical body. So that it was no more subject to death any more than it was subject to the limitations of space and of time. And this is important.

We know that it was no longer subject to the limitations of space and of time. We read this morning that he could enter into a room when the doors were closed and the windows were barred. So it was the same body because Thomas could put his his finger in the wound and his hand in his riven side.

And yet it was different. There was a continuity but there was something different about it what we cannot tell. And not only that he was no longer subject to death.

Let me illustrate what we mean. There were others that Jesus called back into life. Let's just mention one Lazarus that took place just a few days before he himself was crucified.

Lazarus had been dead for he'd been buried for four days or so. He'd been in the tomb and he was raised from the dead. But you see Lazarus came out in the same body unchanged and Lazarus died again.

He only came out from the grave to live a few extra years. I don't know how many. But ultimately dear old Lazarus had to die again and he had to be buried again.

But concerning our Lord Jesus Christ we affirm something quite different. He died and when he died he took the sting out of death and he mastered death. I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forevermore and have the peace of death and of Hades.

What the New Testament affirms is this. He did not only scrape out of the domain of death to have to go back again but he sends forth Lord of it. His master of it.

He's the king of death. We sing do we not? I wonder how many of us realize what we mean. What we should have in mind when we sing those great words.

Death of deaths and hell's destruction. Land me safe on Canaan's side. What we mean is this.

Jesus not only rose from the grave but he mastered death. He conquered it and he's alive never more to go back. They've been studying in the epistle to the Hebrews and it makes so much of this.

Jesus is different from the ancient priests and high priests. One for one reason. One reason is this.

Because he ever lives to make intercession for us. The other priests came and then they fell sick and they died just as they do here in Knox. All your pastors will die.

All of us will die unless Jesus comes again and in every other place and somebody else will have to take our place. That's what happens here upon earth but with Jesus he has no successor. No one follows on because he ever lives to make intercession on the basis of his atoning work.

He ever lives. He has no successor. That then is the meaning of resurrection when we speak of our Lord Jesus as being risen from the dead.

The personal resurrection of Jesus is announced by the church as duly authenticated as properly corroborated by witnesses worthy of the name. Whatever else you may say and this is the only thing I have the only reference I make to them this morning. Whatever you may wish to say about the witnesses to the resurrection you have to say this.

They were not bad people. They were not people who would bear false witness willingly. Indeed I should add one thing to that as I have already.

Let's not let's not minimize it. They took note of the details and they needed to be persuaded that the person they saw cooking a meal by the side of a lake for the disciples at the dawn of day that it was the Lord himself. Then they needed to be persuaded by their eyes, by their ears, by the touch and by other means that it was none other than the one who was slain on Calvary's cross.

Now that's what we remember. Brothers and sisters in Christ it's not a figment of imagination. It's not an idea or an ideal.

It is something historical and I trust that in your heart you know something of the music of that today. That's what the church celebrates on Easter day when the church is true to herself and to her charter. Now that brings me to the next thing.

The New Testament now goes on to speak of a pending universal significance of all this. That event touches every man and every woman here this morning. I don't care where you sit or how you sit, whether you're comfortable or uncomfortable.

I apologize some people say our seats are not very comfortable. Well but listen the fact that Jesus rose from the dead has got something to do with you and to say to you. You will never be the same again because Jesus rose from the dead.

I only want to refer to one aspect of that, one relevant aspect of it. When you are buried or when you were created, cremated, you too will rise from the dead. Because he is risen, you'll have to rise from the dead.

You've no argument. You know I can do nothing about it. He's going to call us out.

Death is not the end. He's going to get us out and he's going to get us back. Some to judgment and condemnation and some to life everlasting.

To enter into the fulfillment and the consummation of what they have learned of God and of heaven and of grace in this here and now. But you see the resurrection is not something meaningless, not something irrelevant. It is very relevant for you and if you've never heard this before please allow me to say it again.

You will die but the fact that Jesus rose from the dead means that you'll have to rise again too. Against the sure background of our Lord's historical resurrection, those who acknowledge him as Savior now see their arch enemy disarmed and decapitated like a smitten Goliath. Life has lost its terror and the future is filled with hope.

But to those who reject him still and deny and refuse him as Lord and as Savior and the testimony to his resurrection as well as his birth and life and death. To them this is a challenge, the greatest challenge in life. Because you're answerable to him and one day you'll have to meet him.

Said Jesus in John chapter 5, a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice speaking of himself in the third person as the son of man. A time is coming when all men who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

In a court of law where he was on trial the apostle Paul uttered similar sentiments to a Roman governor named Felix. He put it thus, however he says I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the way. That's how Christianity was known earlier on.

The way, a follower of the way which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the law and that is written in the prophets says Paul. And I have the same hope in God as these men that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and before man. My dear friends, if it is true that Jesus rose from the dead, you and I need to be ready for that day when he will call us out of our graves. Now mystery, mysteries, not mystery, mysteries galore surround that pending event.

And I cannot answer all the questions that you would ask and I don't know of anyone who can. But you see we are dealing here not with an ordinary human but with an infinitely glorious being, the son of God. And there are categories that relate to him and his activities that don't, that I don't understand as an ordinary finite being.

However clever I am, whatever my degrees from the university, I cannot understand the infinite, neither can you. If I could understand everything about him, then I would be equal to him. I need a savior whom I

can understand as far as my reasoning can go, but one who goes infinitely beyond my capacity to reason.

But who acts nevertheless in a manner that is consistent with the things that I know of him, according to the revelation he has given of himself. Such is Jesus of Nazareth. The pending resurrection of all men gives new significance to life in the present.

Now if you become a Christian, if you trust the living, the crucified and living Lord, one of the things that will happen to you is this, you'll begin to have a sense of destiny that you cannot have otherwise. You see, unless you know someone who can deliver you from the grave and from death and keep you and provide for you beyond what we can see, then there is always something clipping your wings. You're just like an eagle chained to earth, and whatever yearnings you have for something more than we can have in the cage of this planet, whatever yearnings you have for outer space and beyond and beyond again, you have no basis for your hopes, unless Jesus is risen from the dead.

So that if you know him as the risen Lord, you begin to know him as such and trust him as such, it gives you a sense of dignity and a sense of hope and a sense of worth. You see my friends, we've been taught to believe that man is nothing but a grown-up tadpole, going back one day to be nothing much more than dust. And if that is true, then it's no wonder that such a large percentage of our young people are committing suicide.

But if we've been made after the image of God and the Son of God has died, not only to give us life in the here and now, but to do something for us that abides beyond the here and now to the there and then, then everything's different. You begin to see that you were made for something big. God has no small people, is the title of a book by a modern writer.

God has no small people. He's made us for eternity. This came home to me when I was visiting my own country, not all that long ago.

It's a Quaint story, perhaps it's not the best illustration, but I'm going to give it this morning. It's an old farmer in North Wales, rather philosophic in his outlook, but Quaint, not very cultured, but he had his own culture. He had occasion to go to an office, a government office, and there he was met by someone whom he said was rather an officious civil servant.

Now please, there are good civil servants, and there are not so good, just as there are good ministers, and there are not so good. So every civil servant is not a bad person, and I'm not suggesting that. But this civil servant was apparently terribly officious and arrogant, and he looked into the face of the country bumpkin who'd come in in his country clothes, sat down in his office, and he brought some forms out for him to fill, and he treated him as if he were quite an imbecile, incapable of writing, incapable of anything.

And he, oh I can't give you all the details, but it boiled down to this. He came to him and he said, now look sir, he said, I want your full name written down there, and he pointed to the lines as if the old man couldn't see it. You write your full name there, and he said it about five times, and your full address there on that line, he repeated that four or five times, I want your full name, your date of birth, and all the rest of it, and you make sure that you put it all there.

The old man had hardly said a word. He went to fill in the form, and he thought, how can I teach this man who I am? He wants my full address. This is what he wrote.

John Sechred Jones, now some of you don't know that name, Sechred, well I'm introducing it to you today. Plas Ablodai Farm, a palace of flowers farm, Carnarvon, North Wales, United Kingdom, Europe, Planet Earth, ah but wait a moment, the eternal purposes of almighty God, the eternal purposes of almighty God. Where did the old country bumpkin get that from? I'll tell you, he tells us.

He'd been reading the story of the resurrection, and how he had died with Christ, and risen with Christ, and was seated in the heavenly places, and was one of Christ's, a limb of the body, and he saw himself as destined for a future, as the body of which Christ is the head. He couldn't be cowed. I wonder whether some of us have a very poor view of ourselves this morning, because we are seeing ourselves as just bits of dust, or let me repeat, as tadpoles grown up.

See yourself as the one for whom Christ died, and rose again, and is alive forevermore, and pleads your cause at God's right hand, and the whole vast vistas of eternity have a new significance for you. You're something to live for, you're something to die for. That's the resurrection.

The pending resurrection of all men is a fact fraught with both challenge and comfort. Challenge for those who do not accept him, and do not trust him, because as we've said twice already, all men will be raised from the dead. But what comfort for those who trust in him.

Christ's resurrection is the proof of the believers pending resurrection for this reason. If he rose from the dead as he promised, then he is the person he said he was. It's the capstone upon his teaching and upon his claims.

And if he is risen from the dead, then he is able to fulfill his promises. And if he is risen from the dead, he is able to fulfill his purposes. Nothing can stand in his way now, and you have a place in that.

By the grace of God, if you trust him and have repented of your sin, not only that, but the resurrection of our Lord Jesus is the pattern of ours. We too shall receive a new body. During this last year, we have buried so many people from this congregation.

Some of our dearest, some very, very dear people, not within our own families, beyond our own families, have been called away from this life. Oh my good friends, there is something here for all of us when we remember that those who died in weakness of body, diseased, will one day receive a new body like unto his glorious body, changed yet different, suited for their new environment and their new sphere in the Jerusalem that is above, come down to a rejuvenated earth and the future that God has prepared for his own. Now, lastly, just a word about this, the present and the personal significance of the same Easter tidings.

You see, you see what we've been doing. We've been pointing far back 2,000 years to something we say happened, and we've been pointing I don't know how far forward because I don't know when the end is coming, and I don't pretend to, but it's coming. And so here we are this morning having the arrogance to point back so far and forward maybe, maybe thousands of years yet, maybe just a couple of weeks, maybe just a couple of days.

Is there anything that brings the thing more imminently near and more personally near to me? Well, that's the glory of the Christian experience. You see, what the Christian experience of forgiveness and of becoming a child of God really is, is nothing other than the resurrection of the inner man. The body is still alive, but the inner man in all of us, the spirit in all of us, because of sin is dead.

This is one reason why we are not responsive to God, and we don't, we hardly know God. By nature, we are not sensitive to God. We wouldn't know if he were absent this morning.

We wouldn't know if he were present. You don't know whether God has spoken to you or not. By nature, we know next to nothing about God.

We don't have, you see, the apparatus to receive the broadcasts of the heavenly throne, and we can't tune in, and we don't know our Maker's voice, and we don't receive our Maker's power. We are just cut off. We are dead in trespasses and sins.

And as Jesus told Nicodemus, what we need is to be, is to have a new birth, not of this physical body now, but of the inner part of us, of the spirit, of the soul. We need to come to new life. That's exactly what the Christian experience is.

The Christ who died upon the cross to bear our sins away is alive forevermore. And what happens when a man becomes a Christian is this, he breathes that life of his into our hearts, into our spirits, and we become new creatures. So that wherever there is a man or a woman, a boy or a girl that becomes a Christian, he or she is in touch with the Christ who died and is alive again.

He is the only adequate source of the Christian experience as biblically conceived. The experience whereby sins are so forgiven that we have peace with God. The experience whereby we are so transformed that, whereas once we thought God was the greatest hindrance to our well-being, we now see God as the object of our love, of our praise, of our worship, the one that we should serve and serve forever, and more and more we begin to delight in God.

Now that's miracle. That's nothing sheer of miracle. How does that happen? It happens because the Jesus who died on the cross is alive again, and he breathes his spirit upon us.

It's the miracle of the living Lord active in the church. And you see, that's why the church is here today, 2,000 years after the resurrection. Just imagine it, just imagine it.

You start a little club, you think it'll remain 2,000 years hence? How is the church in existence today? It has been persecuted, its Bible has been burnt. There was one of the emperors who collected all the Bibles that you could lay a hand on, and made a pyre in Rome, and fired them, and said, Christianity, he said, is extinct. Christianity has been buried many times, but it's risen like its Lord from the dead, because Christianity's Lord and Savior is a living Lord and Savior.

Up from the grave he arose, and up from the grave his people will rise again. And that's the history of the church. We call it revivals.

There are countries, there are nations where the church of Jesus Christ is now thriving, and you can't count the people that are coming in, and you can't cope with young converts, you don't know what to do. And new churches are coming into existence every day, 500 in Africa every week. But in other parts of the world it's going the other way.

How are these young churches coming into existence? The answer is this, the Christ who died is alive again, and he's about his business, the same business as he was at before he died. And with the same dynamic divine power, he persuades the mind, he illumines the conscience, he wins the heart, he changes and transforms men, and makes them his own. And so you see, the Christian experience finds its

mainspring in the past, where Christ was born of the virgin, died on the cross, rose again, and ascended to the Father's right hand.

It looks forward into the future, the unknown, the unseen, and we've only got faint foreglims of what's to come. But it looks forward with anticipation and with hope. How can it do that? Because it is now in touch with the Christ who is, who is alive from the dead, and is alive forevermore.

And you can live, you can talk with him, and walk with him, and pray to him. And he hears your prayers, and he meets your needs, and he comes down into your circumstances, and right in the here and now, the living Lord communicates with you. That's why.

So that the present link with a living Savior authenticates the past, and makes the unseen future all glorious and certain, as the promises of our Lord. I conclude. It's a great privilege to preach this message today.

I wish I could preach it as it deserves to be preached. There is no message like it, not in the whole wide world, nothing like this. But what is your response to Jesus Christ? You see, if he was still on the cross, you might say to yourself, well, I can leave him there, he won't hurt me, and I won't have to answer to him for the testimony borne to me concerning him.

But if he's alive from the dead, at the end of every alley, every avenue, you may take stands Christ the Lord. You may die a lingering death that lasts for many a month. At the end, you will meet Christ the Lord, the Judge.

You may be taken in a moment. Beyond that moment, you will face the living Lord Jesus Christ. You may take your own life.

Beyond that, you will meet the same living Lord Christ. He's inescapable now. There is no way out of it.

And not only within planet earth, but wherever you go, wherever you are, our Lord, risen from the dead, the Lord of life and destiny, he cannot be evaded and ultimately avoided. He stands to face you, and you must face him. What will you do with him? Is he your Savior this morning? I plead with you, I plead with you, if never before in your life you've come to face these issues, face them.

On this glad Easter day, in the year of our Lord, 1983, Christ died for your sins according to the scriptures. He was buried in the tomb. He rose from the dead.

He lives forever. Come to God through him. Take his promises back to him and ask him as he promised when here upon earth to receive you as his own and start a new life, following in his footmarks, living in his presence.

Let us pray. Oh glorious Redeemer, oh infinitely glorious Lord, we worship you. We confess our sins of doubt, denial, sloth, thoughtlessness, and very much, oh Lord, our sins are very much like those of Pilate.

We don't want to be upset. We don't want to lose what now we have to do what we ought with Jesus, the sinless Nazarene. We would acknowledge our sins to you at the close of our morning worship and we do so asking that of your mercy you will grant us the confidence in him that we need to trust him as our Savior, to obey him as our Lord, and to honor him as our King of Kings.

So bless this day to us and through us bless it to others that henceforth we may live as the very hands of Christ, uttering the very words of Christ, the living Lord, breathing his very spirit into our troubled world and bringing his glorious hope into a bleak, barren, bewildered society that languishes in death. Oh hear our cry in his holy name. Amen.

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