

Easter Sunday

David Simpson

"Are We Really Living?"

John 10:10

I want to ask you some soul-searching questions on this Easter Sunday:

#1 - Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, including your sins, and that he conquered death and walked out of the tomb that first Easter morning, very much alive? Amen? If YES, then...

#2 - Have you given your life to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He your Lord, your Master? Have you been baptized into Him and are you striving to live faithfully for Him?

If YES, then....

#3 - Is your life dull? Are you living in a rut? Are you frustrated with living sometimes? Are you continually not satisfied with life? Do you find no real purpose in your existence now? Do you struggle with bad attitudes?

If you answered "Yes" to believing in the truth of Jesus and "Yes" to giving your life to Him, and "Yes" to struggling with contentment and attitudes...then, something is wrong. I don't mean a little bit wrong...I mean big-time wrong.

The reason I can say that is that your life in Christ should be different because of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus said, as recorded in John 10:10 - "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

My friend, the devil is the thief. He wants to steal every bit of your joy. He wants to kill your spirit. He wants to destroy your enthusiasm and any faith that may bring you closer to Christ. How many of you have let the devil do that to you?

The resurrection of Jesus conquered the power of Satan. Satan wanted to steal us away, but Jesus says that the believer is His and

Satan cannot take us away if we resist. Satan wanted to take away our life – to kill life and give misery – Jesus came to give life! Satan wanted to destroy all that God made. Jesus came to bring renewal and life again. Revelation says there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We'll have a new life with our Lord!

Folks, Satan cannot defeat you unless you let Him. His power over you is a false power. However, Jesus can give you life, and it's the real thing! Christ came to change lives now and forever. It's not just the forever part that will be great. It's the here and now part that Jesus wants to impact as well. How should your life be different because of the risen Christ?

1. Your life should be filled with faith because of Christ.

Your life should be hope-filled; joy-filled; strength-filled; faith-filled; love-filled; peace-filled; purpose-filled, etc. Your life and mine should be a testimony of what living is all about, all because of Jesus.

I have mistakenly felt that when Jesus spoke about life, he was only talking about eternal life... I mean isn't that what Easter is all about? He conquered death, so that when we die, we too, can inherit eternal life. That's true, and that is the central focus of Easter, eternal life...but if we leave out the other fact, that Jesus came to bring meaning to life now, we are making a serious mistake.

I think that is why Jesus appeared so many times to his disciples after the resurrection. He wanted them to believe that He was indeed alive again. He wanted them to have faith. Not just a faith that He was alive, but that they too would live again with Him forever. Faith that would carry them through some of the most difficult days when people would challenge their beliefs. Faith that would strengthen them when they were imprisoned. Faith that would give meaning to their message. Faith that would give purpose to their lives. Faith that would stand in the face of their persecutors and says: "Death cannot defeat me, because my faith is in one who lives again!"

He wanted His disciples then and now to know there was a reason to live! He promised them power to enable them to serve Him. He wanted them to live life fully for Him. Maybe this world is a battleground with sin. But, Jesus did not come so that we should run from the battle, but that we should run to the battle and be victorious through Him.

2. Your life should be filled with hope because of Christ.

Have any of you seen this TV show: "Flash Forward?" I'm not sure where it's headed and I don't have time to explain it, but, in the episode last Thursday, one of the main characters is in the middle of the desert land of Somalia and turns to his co-workers and says: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Faith and I are watching this so I said to Faith, "Do you know where that quote is from?" She wasn't sure, even though we both had English Lit in College. Anyway...it's from Dante's Divine Comedy – The Inferno. It is an inscription in his epic poem of a sign at the entrance to Hell that reads: "Abandon Hope all Ye Who enter here."

That's exactly the goal of Satan's attacks on you. He wants you to abandon hope. He wants you to give up. He wants you to cave in. He wants you to doubt. He wants you to complain. He wants you to be absolutely totally completely miserable!

Folks, on this Easter I want you to do a quick inventory of yourself. If you have abandoned hope. If you have given up. If you have caved in. If you are filled with doubt. If you are filled with a complaining spirit. If you are the definition of misery... then know for certain today that the devil has a foothold in your life and you have delegated Jesus, our risen Lord – the hope of the world – into a dark corner of your life.

It's time to let him thrive in your life! Your life should be marked by hope. 1 Peter 3:15 says:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

Has anyone asked you lately to explain the hopeful attitude that you have? Why not? Maybe it's because we have not set apart Christ as Lord over our hearts. We have let misery and doubt and all their relatives take over the leadership of our hearts and attitudes. My friend, this should not be!

No wonder so many people don't believe in the risen Lord. It's because they haven't seen enough Christians who actually have a hope that inspires and challenges them to give their lives to one who is greater and gives purpose and meaning for living!

3. Your life should be filled with anticipation because of Christ.

John said in John 20:30,31 -

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Lloyd John Ogilvie, one time chaplain of our nation's Senate, tells of an interview he had with James S. Stewart, the great Scottish Presbyterian preacher. This was at a time of feverish activity, stress, and great demands in Ogilvie's life. His wise preacher friend gave him some sound advice.

"Lloyd," he said, "do what you can in any day. Expect the Lord to intervene with supernatural power, and live life as a privilege."

Do you wake up in the morning with a sense of anticipation? Do you say, as did the Psalmist, "This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Do you wake up saying "Good morning Lord!" Or, do you say, "Good Lord, it's morning!!"

Where is the anticipation for living that Christ brought to us because of His sacrifice and resurrection? Sin doesn't have to dominate our

lives because of Christ. Death doesn't have to overcome us and depress us because of Christ.

Every Christian should have such an anticipation for living that others would walk up to you and say: "What makes you so happy?" "What makes you so vibrant?" "Where does your joy come from?"

Sin and Satan want to destroy life. John 10:10 (Living Trans)

¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. - New Living Translation

That's why we must continually battle against the ravages of sin. Romans 6:11 says: "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Life is precious. Life is a privilege. Life is a blessing of God. And he has promised to believers that life will continue in eternity, because of Christ.

That's the difference between the suicide bombers of Islam and us. We don't follow some self-proclaimed Messiah. We follow one who is the Messiah. Who proved he was the Christ.

We don't have some death-wish that would take our own life and that of others.

We have a life wish - abundant life now... Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Christians, of all the world's religions, should and do value life the most, because our leader, our Master, Our Savior, our Lord, is not dead, but alive! And not only that, He is preparing a home for those who believe in Him and follow Him.

Jesus said it best, "Because I live, you too shall live."

Eternally, yes.

But real living now, too.

The old Camp chorus we used to sing says: "I'm really living

since I met my Lord, I'm really living since I met my Lord, I'm really living living living living...living living living living, LIVING...since I met my Lord!"

Does that describe you? If not, something is wrong.

"The great Easter truth is not that we are to live newly after death, but that we are to be new here and now by the power of the resurrection." - Phillips Brooks

I don't think it is any accident that the resurrection of Christ occurred in the Spring. Spring brings new life. The cold and misery of winter is over, and a warmth, a renewal, a freshness begins in Spring. Because of the resurrection of Christ, the darkness and misery of sin is over...and for believers a warmth, a renewal, a new life has begun. Just as there is an anticipation of Spring at this time every year...people love to get outside in the sunshine...there should be an anticipation about life because of Jesus.

When Paul talks about baptism, he speaks of a new life beginning. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

If you and I are dragging through life as a Christian, something is wrong.

If you and I whine and pout, more than praise, something is wrong.

If you and I walk around acting like the Poster boy or girl for "stinkin' thinkin'", something is wrong.

If you and I are filled with more discouragement, than encouragement something is wrong.

If you and I live as if we had no hope, then something is terribly wrong.

I am ashamed that I have wasted my life at times. I am ashamed for my life-robbing attitude at times.

I am ashamed that I claim Christ as my Savior - the one who is life - and then mope and sulk because of some minor inconvenience.

I am ashamed that Jesus offers me resurrection power through His

Spirit and I resist.

Paul, who once persecuted Christians, who was an enemy of the church - encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus one day, was baptized into Christ, filled with his Holy Spirit, and was never the same. Listen to what he said in Romans 8:11 - "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you."

CONCLUSION:

It's time for a change this Easter. Jesus came to bring you life. Quit wasting it. Allow His life giving Spirit to reign in your life so that you may use your life for Him. And at this time of the year, when the flowers are blooming...maybe your life, with the help of Christ, can bloom for Him.

Jesus said, "Because I live, you too shall live." Let's get busy living....we've got a lot to do, and a lot of lives to touch and influence, before we go to be forever alive with Him.

Are you really living as a believer in Christ...you should be...His resurrection makes it all possible!

By David Simpson