

Risen & Exalted

Acts 1:1-11

We gather this Sunday (and every Sunday) under the name and the authority of a risen Lord.

*The **good news** of Easter is the **news** that gave birth to the Christian faith.

*"...they **took him down** from the tree and **laid him in a tomb**. But God **raised** him from the dead, and for many days **he appeared**...And we bring you the good news." (Acts 13:29-32)*

*That is the good news we declare today! Jesus Christ is **risen and exalted!**

*Some say the month of March "**comes in like a Lion, goes out like a Lamb.**"

*May we always remember that on **Good Friday our Lord was laid in the tomb a Crucified Lamb** but on **Easter Sunday** he triumphantly rose as a **Victorious Lion**.

*His burial was not a **one-way trip to the grave**. Rather, He entered through deaths' door and came out the other side as Risen Lord.

*The angelic declaration on the first Easter is **still true: "He is not here. He is risen!"**

Today we open to the 1st chapter of Acts:

*Some call it the "**Acts of the Apostles**"; others the "**Acts of the Holy Spirit**"; others the "**Acts of the Risen Lord**"; others the "**Acts of the Early Church**."

*Whoever we credit the ACTS to, the book begins with the **Risen Lord walking the earth, teaching his disciples, and in a final act of triumph ascending to glory** (where He still is today).

*In fact, most Bibles have **chapter titles** and Acts 1 inevitably **bears the title: "The Ascension."**

*The events described here (combined with the Resurrection) is what **gave believers confidence and courage** knowing that the risen Lord has been **crowned King of glory**.

"Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne; Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own. Awake my soul and sing, of Him who died for Thee. And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity."

1. Jesus is alive, (v.1-3)

- *Life before death* (v.1-2)
- *Life after death* (v.3)

*"In the **first book**, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that **Jesus began to do and teach**, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.*

***I love a good historian** who brings events of history to life with compelling detail. **Stephen Ambrose is my favorite**, with books like "**Nothing Like it in the World**" and "**Band of Brothers**"

*Luke is a historian, who did **extensive research on eyewitness testimony** about the person and work of Jesus, and wrote it all down in a **2 part historical narrative**.

*His first book (“LUKE”) recorded all the work *Jesus began to do*, from **Birth to Resurrection** and there was truly **“Nothing Like it in the World.”**

*His second book (ACTS) recorded all the work Jesus continued to do through the **“Band of Brothers”** known as the Church.

*Luke’s first book formed the storyline for **“The Promise.”** One man wrote:

*“[My son] and I saw the Promise for the first time last night...It was a very moving performance...The singing, dancing, story, narration, production and the whole crew were excellent...Thanks to all of you for spreading the word of Jesus and his story in such a captivating way. I particularly loved the message by Pastor Christian to give perspective on **why** things happened the way they did. If you focus just on **what** happened it is truly heartbreaking, but listening to **why it happened** (the fact that it happened for us) gives a sense of profound humility and thanks which brings love, joy and inspiration to follow the path of Jesus.”*

*May we never forget the **What and Why** of Easter:

***What?** Jesus **died for our sins**; was **buried**; and 3 days later was **raised** triumphantly.

***Why?** *God demonstrated his love in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

BUT...the historical details Luke records next are what really gave birth to the early church:

*3 He **presented himself alive** to them after his suffering **by many proofs**, appearing to them **during forty days** and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

*My daughter is a huge fan of the hit Broadway musical **“Hamilton”** and early in 2020 had a chance to see the show and meet her favorite cast members.

*When her favorite actor, **Damarius**, walked out of the building, Darci was star struck and with tears of joy, hugged him, and said: **“You’re a person!? You’re a real person!?”**

*Imagine the joy of having been able to embrace Jesus face to face...in the flesh, after he died!

*This January, perhaps you saw the news story that was reported on ABC News:

“Woman ruled dead in 2017 fights to be declared alive.” (Jan. 2021, ABC News)

*A 58 year old Frenchwoman (Jeanne Pouchain) from Lyon area has **“an unusual problem.”** Due to legal mishap, she was ruled **“officially dead”** in 2017 and for **three years** has been in/out of court trying **“to prove that she is alive.”**

*In the **days following the resurrection**, Jesus encountered an **unusual problem**: People who had witnessed his death doubted he was actually alive.

*So, Luke says that **Jesus spent 40 days giving one undeniable PROOF after another that He was indeed alive...and was a “real person!”**

*Consider the proof of his bodily resurrection:

Jesus met them;

He went with them (walking);

He said to them (talking);

He was at table (sitting);

He came & stood;

He showed them his hands and feet;

They took hold of his feet;

Jesus stood on the shore;

“Touch me and see”;

“Put your finger here...put out your hand and place it in my side”;

They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Jesus took bread and gave it to them

“Come and have breakfast.”

***Who says Christianity is not based in fact?**

***There is only one reason the church exists today: Jesus is alive!**

***The entire Christian faith is rooted in the eyewitness testimony of those 40 days.**

***Without the proof of those 40 days, there would be no global church, and the ground on which we gather today would be an old orchard.**

2. ...and is still at work, (v.4-8)

- *His gift for us* (v.4-5)
- *His promise to us* (v.6-8)

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

***Where would we be without the gift of the Holy Spirit?**

***Jesus considered the gift of the Holy Spirit to be better for us than having himself here:**

“It is to your advantage that I go away.”

“If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.”

“If I go, I will send Him to you.”

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

*In the next chapter, the gift comes: ***“The Coming of the Holy Spirit.”***

*And all through the book of Acts, Luke records over **50 references** to the **Holy Spirit** who fills, baptizes, leads, guides, convicts, directs, sanctifies...and continues to work 2,000 years later.

*It’s almost impossible to comprehend, but what Jesus seems to be saying is:

“The Spirit INSIDE you is better than Jesus BESIDE you.”

*6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that **the Father has fixed by his own authority.** 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

*How many have ever been impatient with God’s timing? Or wanted Him to hurry?

*I love how impatient the disciples are because they are so much like us!

*They want God’s plan hurried along. They want to know exact times and dates.

*Now that Jesus is alive, these guys probably assume: ***“Surely NOW IS THE TIME for worldwide triumph, national restoration and final days of glory...etc.”***

*But Jesus said: *“It is not for you to know the times or seasons the **Father has FIXED...**”*

*IOW: *“There are things you don’t understand. Don’t get impatient. You’re going to have to wait. But don’t you worry: the Father is in charge of times & seasons.”*

*By the way, that is the **message of Isaiah**, and of **all Scripture**:

***God has a plan, it is unfolding in history, and He is in charge of times and seasons.**

3. ...as exalted King of history. (v.9-10)

*9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, **he was lifted up**, and a cloud took him out of their sight.*

*Those who have **watched the Blue Angel air show** will recall that moment when the F-18’s **ascend into the sky at high velocity...and you strain your eyes up, until they are lost from sight**

*Even with uncertainty of *How did he do it? Or How did this happen?..marvel at the fact that **Jesus was lifted up and actually ascended in all of his triumphant glory.***

*This is **(in my opinion)** one of the **most underrated themes in the church today.**

*Yes, Christ **defeated death at the Resurrection, but he also proved that He is the sovereign King by ascending to the throne of Heaven with power.**

*For the **early church, these 2 events combined to give them confidence:**

*At the resurrection, Christ proved that death itself could not defeat Him.

*At the ascension, Christ showed that He is seated with all rule and authority.

*The biblical phrase that captures this: ***“Seated at the right hand of the Father.”***

***More than 20x in the NT** (which is more than they even write about the cross or his blood), the authors point to Jesus as seated with the Father and having all authority.

TOP 5: (Including Mk 16:19; Acts 2:33; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:1; 1 Peter 3:21-22; and 10x in Rev.)

Heb. 1:3 *“After making purification for sins, **he sat down at the right hand** of the Majesty on high.”*

Acts 5:30 *“God **exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior**, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”*

Rom. 8:34 *Christ Jesus is the one who **died**—more than that, who was **raised**—who is **at the right hand of God**, who indeed is **interceding for us**.*

Eph 1:20-21 *“...when he raised him from the dead and **seated him at his right hand** in the heavenly places, **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...**”*

Heb 10:12-13 *“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of God**, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.”*

Put in simple terms, His exaltation means:

- **He is in charge.**
- **He is forgiving sins.**
- **He is praying for us.**
- **He has all authority.**
- **He will win the final victory.**

*As the disciples gaze up into the sky with **awestruck wonder**, two angels appear:

*10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was **taken up from you into heaven**, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

***There it is! The event and the news that gave confidence and courage to the early church.**

***Jesus is alive...He is Risen and Exalted as King of glory...and He’s coming back!**

*The church has gathered every Easter for 2000 years to celebrate this victory.

Action Steps:

- **Undaunted Courage:** *Endure trials with faith in the Risen Lord.*
- **Band of Brothers:** *Raise your commitment level to the people Jesus saved.*

- **Nothing Like it in the World:** *You are not crazy for loving a Savior you have never met.*
 - *Our faith is rooted in historical evidence that Jesus is alive and is seated with authority.
 - *Peter said to early believers: *“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible.” (1 Peter 1)*
 - *Our Christian **faith is rooted in the eyewitness facts that Jesus is alive.**

- **The Victors:** *God’s unfolding plan is leading to a triumphant return.*
 - *Like the disciples, there are things we do not know about **times or seasons or dates.**
 - *But we walk through life confident that God’s plan is unfolding, and that times and seasons are in the hands of a Father who works all things according to His will.
 - *And the promise of the angels made to the disciples is still believable and true:
“This Jesus...will come in the same way as you saw him go...” (Acts 1)