



**A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by The Reverend Andrew Van Culin, *Rector***

**The 3rd Sunday of Easter (Year C)
01 May 2022**

Speaker 1:

Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for by his great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Amen.

Hallelujah, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Hallelujah. We know these words. They are the opening acclamation to all of our Easter time services. And yet, do we know them? The danger of familiar words is that we just say them without reflecting upon them without remembering what they really mean, or perhaps how profound they are. And so, with these 10 words, we make one of the most succinct statements of faith that we possess, but we may not realize how profound it is. So here we are. We begin each of these services, we've begun today's service with these words. Hallelujah, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Hallelujah. But let's hear them today.

The first word, hallelujah. It is the first and the last and we'll say more at the end, but it is a reminder that what we are about to say is a good thing. This thing that we are about to proclaim is good news. It is good news to our souls and I pray, good news to the world. And so, we begin with that shout of acclamation and joy, hallelujah.

The second word, Christ. Now, Christ in our context as Christians today is a often understood, perhaps, either as a reference to Jesus or an acclamation of a divine presence, but in the ancient world, it was something very specific. To recognize that Jesus is the Christ was to proclaim that Jesus was the anointed one, that he, the person from Nazareth who walked through Galilee and to Jerusalem to Golgotha, that he was the Messiah. That he was not just a person of God, but a particular person of God, that he was the promise of God, a promise that had preceded him for generations, for centuries, even for millennia, that the long awaited Messiah had come. And not just as a person, but as a way.



We may recall that the first disciples, the first followers of Jesus proclaim themselves as the followers of the way. And so, to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus is the Messiah, is to recognize that his way, his way of grace, his way of mercy, his way of healing and life giving, his way of sacrifice and of suffering out of love, his way was the promised way of God, that all the Messiah marked, the way of redemption, the way of life, the way of hope was tied up, wrapped up in the way of Jesus, the Christ. And so with that opening word of Christ, we proclaim that Jesus, the way of Jesus is in fact, the way of the Messiah, the way of God, the way of generosity and suffering and sacrifice is God's way in the world. And that it is the way of hope for the world.

The third word, in English, it comes out as two words. In Greek, it would simply be one. But the third word is this, is risen. Not was raised, not will be raised, but is risen. Here we take this further step in our proclamation as we recognize that Jesus, the Messiah, is not contained in the person of Jesus, that Jesus, the Christ is not contained in the place of Galilee and Jerusalem, that Jesus, the Christ is not contained or limited by the time of his lifespan, that in fact, the way of God, the way of Christ is an eternal way. It is risen. It is here and now. It is the profoundest of ways to proclaim that the way of God is eternal. Nothing can break that promise or that way, not even destruction or death, for God will prevail, for God's way will persist. And new life will be raised.

Christ is risen. The way of God, the way of God's hope and God's life is and always will be eternal. That is to say that we can come to know and to live that very good news of God's promise and love and life here and now, that we can experience, you and I can experience that same fullness of God that Peter and Thomas and the disciples and Mary and those two, Cleopas, and those walking to Emmaus, that we can experience the fullness of God's presence as they did in their life and in their way. We can wrap our minds around the fact and the promise that God's way is eternal.

But this last phrase, the Lord, is where it really gets challenging. For here in this proclamation, we say two things, we say that the way of Jesus, the person of Jesus, the Christ is God, not just a sage wise teacher, not just a healer of one's body or one's soul, but very God indeed. And if God, then master and friend, one to whom I will commit my life, one whom I will call Lord of my life. The hardest commitment, the hardest word of all 10, because it is the word of commitment that we make. While the first two may be about way and promise, this third word is the word about our heart and our life, that I will make the Christ, risen, my God and my Lord, or to use the words of Thomas himself, my Lord and my God.



A fourth word, indeed. That is to say, truly, this is the story of faith and life, that this simple acclamation of faith, Christ is risen, the Lord is risen indeed, is the truth of life. The world may proclaim other truths, that you are alone, that you are responsible for yourself, that the best and the strongest and the fiercest or the smartest or the most popular is who you are called to be. And yet when we say, indeed, we say that, no, this is who we are called to be, participants in the way of the Messiah, the way of Jesus, the eternal way of God who is my Lord, the God, the way of generosity and sacrifice and of love.

And so we come again to the first and the last word, hallelujah. We close our acclamation with a reminder that all that we have proclaimed, hard and challenging as it is, difficult as it is to proclaim anyone Lord and God in our lives, that that is in fact, good news when it is Christ who is our Lord. And so we open these series of services for this Easter time in the same way, with the ancient words, hallelujah, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Hallelujah.