

2023 Easter Morning Service

1 Cor 15:12-19; 54-57

“If Christ is Not Risen”

Invocation And Scripture Reading

1. Welcome,
2. Layout of the Service.
3. Scripture reading and opening Prayer before worship.

- I would like to first read a Jewish Prophecy:

Isaiah 25:8-9

8 He will swallow up death forever,

And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;

The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth;

For the LORD has spoken.

9 And it will be said in that day:

"Behold, this is our God;

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the LORD;

We have waited for Him;

We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

- Now I would like to read the fulfillment of this Prophecy

Matt 28:1-4

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

The Gospel of Luke adds:

Luke 24:2-7

2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?

6 "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,

7 "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' "

Matt 28:5-8

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "**Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.**

6 "**He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.** Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 "**Now go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead,** and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; **there you will see Him.** Behold, I have told you."

8 So **they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.**

Opening Prayer.

Sermon Begins:

The Reading of the Scripture for today's message:

1 Cor 15:3b-4

#1 ...**that Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures,

#2 and **that He was buried,**

#3 and **that He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures,

1 Cor 15:12-19

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise.

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

1 Cor 15:54-57

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "**Death is swallowed up in victory.**"

55 "**O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?**"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Prayer

Introduction

We are at the end of Christianity as an "American Religion"; but Atheism, Secularism, and a Demonic version of Christianity (i.e. LGBTIQ+), which has already happened in most mainline denominations.

Statistic show:

- **1945 – 75%** of people living in America **considered themselves Christian** and **regularly went to church.**

- **1960** – Dropped to **70%**
- **2019** – That number dropped to **45%**
- **2023** – Now after COVID – That number has dropped to **20%**.
Today, **28%** of Regular church attenders before COVID, **have not returned to church.**

Soon Christianity here in America, like in Europe will go the way of the Dinosaurs, except for a remnant.

- **2 Thes 2** – Prophecies before the Anti-Christ will show himself, he will wait for this great “Apostasia” or falling away of Christianity.
2 Thes 2:3
3 Let no one deceive you by any means; **for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first,** and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
- **Hebrew 10:25** Christians are warned to not get caught up in this exodus of the church as so many will, but as for you don’t forsake the gathering of the brethren.
Heb 10:25
25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Article in the Los Angeles times 2021: Op-ed: “Why Americas record godlessness is good news for Nations”

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-04-02/godlessness-america-religion-secularization>

The secularization of U.S. society — the waning of religious faith, practice and affiliation — is continuing at a dramatic and historically unprecedented pace.

While many may consider such a development as cause for concern, such a worry is not warranted.

This increasing godlessness in America is actually a good thing, to be welcomed and embraced. Democratic societies that have experienced the greatest degrees of secularization are among the healthiest, wealthiest and safest in the world, enjoying relatively low rates of violent crime and high degrees of well-being and happiness.

Clearly, a rapid loss of religion does not result in societal ruin.

For the first time since Gallup began tracking the numbers in 1937. Americans who are members of a church, synagogue or mosque were not in the majority. According to a Gallup report released this week, compares today’s 47% to 1945, when more than 75% of Americans belonged to a religious congregation.

This decline in religious affiliation aligns closely with many similar secularizing trends.

For example, in the early 1970s only one in 20 Americans claimed “none” as their religion, but today it is closer to one in three.

Over this same time period, weekly church attendance has decreased. The percentage of Americans who never attend religious services has increased from 9% to 30%.

In **1976, nearly 40% of Americans** said they believed that the Bible **was the actual word of God, to be taken literally.**

Today only about a quarter of Americans believe that, with slightly more decreeing the Bible is simply a **collection of fables, history and morality tales written by men.**

And **the percentage of Americans who confidently believe in God's existence, without a doubt,** has **declined from 63% in 1990 to 53% today.**

Organic secularization can occur for many reasons. It happens when members of a society become better educated, more prosperous, and live safer, more secure, and more peaceful lives; when societies experience increases in social isolation; when people have better healthcare; when more women hold paying jobs; when more people wait longer to get married and have kids. All of these, especially in combination, can decrease religiosity.

Another major factor is the ubiquity of the internet, which provides open windows to alternative worldviews and different cultures that can corrode religious conviction — and allows budding skeptics and nascent freethinkers to find, support, and encourage one another.

In the United States, these factors are further compounded by strong backlashes against the religious right, the evangelical-Republican alliance, conservative religion's anti-gay agenda ...

Fears of atheistic authoritarianism aside, some may worry about religious organizations fading away because they do so much good. They do engage in a tremendous amount of charitable work that includes holding food drives and setting up soup kitchens and homeless shelters. However, such welcomed charity is ultimately an altruistic response to symptoms, not a structural cure for root causes.

This is why highly secular democracies do a much better job of ameliorating homelessness and poverty by employing decidedly secular solutions, such as responding with rational social policies and wise economic strategies, and setting up more responsive institutions. Affordable housing and subsidized healthcare do a far better job of alleviating the suffering of the poor and the sick than faith-based charities.

Secularity is highly correlated with a host of moral orientations that will markedly improve our nation. For instance, secular people — when compared to their religious peers — are far more likely to understand and respect the scientific method, which results in their increased willingness to get vaccinated, for instance, and adhere to empirically grounded health recommendations, a rational orientation that saves lives. Secular people are also more supportive of sex education, which reduces unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Research shows that secular people are more likely to support women's reproductive rights, universal healthcare, gay rights, environmental protections, death with dignity, gun safety legislation and treating drug abuse as a medical problem rather than a criminal problem — all of which will serve to increase dignity, liberty, and the well-being in America.

The organic secularization we are experiencing in the United States is a progressive force for good, one that is associated with improved human rights, more protections for planet Earth and

an increased sociocultural propensity to make this life as fair and just as we can — in the here and now — rather than in a heavenly reward that fewer and fewer of us believe in.

Phil Zuckerman is associate dean of Pitzer College and author of “Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment.”

Thinking on this low spot our Nation is in, and the Demonic perversion of it all, “I was reminded”:

Jesus said:

Matt 16:18...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Luther’s Great Hymn: “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

3 And **though this world, with devils filled,**
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! **his doom is sure;**
one little word shall fell him.

4 the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!

Jesus is alive and there is no doubt about it!!!!

Though at this time before the rapture much of the world rejects it.

Why should we believe this Truth of Jesus, the Cross, His Death and His Resurrection?

1. **There is no one like Him in all of History:**

There is nothing in human history that compares to it.

- This carpenter from Nazareth, who never traveled more than 90 miles from his home town. [*Except for the time as a baby his parents took Him to live in Egypt for a season (i.e. Bethlehem to Egypt 430 miles)*].
- Not a great philosopher
- Not of Earthly Royalty or from riches with all of its advantages.
- Not a Great educated man and a Professor.
- Not the world's strongest man.
- Or the Man with the greatest voice.

And Yet:

- Yet the entire world system of dating is based on His Birth.
- And there is more Historical writings on Him, then any other man in History.
- Many Atheistic Lawyers and Philosophers have tried to discredit His resurrection from the dead to only themselves become Believers and Followers of Christ.
- The New Testament Bible was the First book ever Printed on the Printing Press and has remained the most printed book in Human History up to this point.

There were other resurrections recorded:

- Lazarus for example.
- A few others in the Old Testament and New Testament.
- **But Jesus' Resurrection was giving Victory over sin and death to all who would believe.**

Jesus declared about His resurrection:

John 11:25

25 Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.**

Rev 1:18a

18a "**I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.** Amen.

2. There is no other way to escape from our past and present Sinful condition without Jesus!

- 100% of all of us know we are sinners and the weight of the Guilt and Shame is crushing.
- 100% of all of us will die.

Rom 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Isaiah 53:4-6 (NLT)

4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

5 But **he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.**

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

6 **All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.**

3. **If you receive or believe in any part of this story of Jesus, then Believe it all!**

Personal Story:

Years ago, there was a boat harbor in San Diego that wanted someone to come and do an Easter Service, but to have it without mentioning Jesus, the Cross, or His Resurrection, but to put on an Easter Celebration never the less. Of course we chuckled and turned it down.

Quote: (C.S. Lewis) - *Mere Christianity* pg. 55 & 56

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus:

"I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic-on a level with the man who says He is a poached egg-or else He would be the Devil of Hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

There is no "Wonderful Story" or "Good News", without all 3 Facts of Jesus life:

1. **Cross**
2. **Death and Burial**
3. **And the Resurrection.**

You can't take any one of these 3 points away.

- We can't have His Death without the Cross and the spilling of His Blood.

Rom 4:25 (NLT)

25 **He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God (for us to be Justified; i.e. to be without sin in God's sight)**

Heb 9:22c ...For **without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.**

1 John 1:7c ...and **the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.**

John 1:29

29 The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "**Behold! The Lamb of God** who **takes away the sin of the world!**

- And you don't have a Resurrection without a Death.

1 Cor 15:3b-4

#1 ...**that Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures,

#2 and **that He was buried,**

#3 and **that He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures,

We have to receive the whole story or none of the story.

1 Cor 1:18-25 (NLT)

18 **The message of the cross is foolish** to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.

19 As the Scriptures say, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent." 20 So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. 21 **Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.**

22 It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven.

And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom.

23 **So when we preach that Christ was crucified,** the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

24 **But to those called by God to salvation,** both Jews and Gentiles, **Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

25 **This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans,** and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

1 Cor 2:14 (NLT)

14 **But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them** and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.

Conclusion

1 Cor 15:3-7

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

Rom 10:14-15

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Rom 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Rom 10:8-13

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

- ***There is no salvation without a living Savior.***
- ***And there is no salvation without the Messiah making a way for us, through His body.***

Heb 10:10

10 By that will we have been sanctified through **the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

Heb 10:14 **For by one offering He has perfected forever** those who are being sanctified.

2 Cor 5:21

21 For He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin for us,** **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

1 John 1:9

9 If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and **to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

The word of the angels in the Gospel of Matthew, is the correct word for us today, "Go and tell that Jesus is not in the grave, but that He is alive"!!!