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EASTER SUNDAY

HOMILY AND SERMON

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HOMILY

Epistle: Col. iii. 1-7

Gospel: John xx. 1-10

THE resurrection of our Lord is an event in history. But so far from standing alone for ever, it is that which has momentous consequences. Of these, the chief is that because He rose from the dead, other men will rise also.

As regards belief in this event, we find that many who firmly believe that Christ rose as on this day, do not so readily accept the consequences of His rising. This is evident from the fact that they are not expecting the rising of the saints. Herein is a failure to follow out to the full, the consequences of to-day's event—a failure to make the doctrine of resurrection a living faith.

Unconsciously, to some extent, men think of our Lord's rising as a case apart: and thus they put Him in a position of isolation from themselves. Such separation of Him from us, and of His interests from ours, is something that had no place in the Lord's mind, as is evident from His words. These show clearly that though separation was impending for a moment, He did not contemplate a long one. He spoke of seeing His disciples again: of being absent for a little while: and of going to prepare a place, that where He was, there they might be also. And since to be with Him necessitates the same conditions of life as His, it is

evident that His resurrection was the opening of a gate through which others were meant to follow.

To live aright in hope of the life to come, means not only to know the Lord, as many do, but to know also the power of His resurrection, as many fail to do.

That power operates now in ministries and gifts of grace. It is that by which also we are enabled to walk in newness of life. But above all else it is that by which we shall at length attain to resurrection life.

To know the Lord, means to acknowledge Him as the Saviour of the world: as the light of every human soul: and as God of very God.

To know the power of His resurrection is to grasp the fact that His new and risen life is implanted already in our souls, and that it does but await the signal of the Lord's return to energise and change our bodies also.

What a grief it must be to the Lord, to be set in isolation by the members of His Church. He who desires human society, and who came to earth to seek it, is as one left in solitary state in heaven. He whose sympathies are human, and who rejoiced in human friendship, does not find the full benefits of friendship claimed.

How is it that they who believe that the death of Christ was a work of love on their behalf, do not urgently beseech Him to complete His work, and to give them that which is the crowning proof of love—life with Him in heaven?

The highest evidence of love is to desire the loved one's presence. And because we love Him, we beseech Him to appear. And because He loves us, we shall appear with Him in glory.

SERMON

BY A VISITING DEACON

THIS is **the** day of rejoicing: above all days of the year. We have met together to let the House of God ring with our praises and hallelujahs for that which the Lord God brought about amidst men, even the rising from the grave of the Saviour of mankind, the bringing to nought that first, and in time will be that last, enemy of mankind—death.

Gone are those haunting thoughts in our rejoicings at the birth of the Saviour at Christmas, that He had come to suffer and to die for us. No limit is **now** to our thanksgivings, except our own personal unworthiness. Not **only** do we celebrate the reviving of a man from death: we celebrate the rising from the grave of One gifted as man with immortal life, a life that cannot die; and still further, He was One who had passed through all the evils, temptations, hurts and sufferings to which mankind is heir. Let there be no limit to our giving glory to God for this supreme gift to mankind: the limit is only our spiritual incapacities.

This leads to another thought. It is possible to believe in the resurrection of Christ from the grave as a matter of fact, just as we believe to be true many facts that are recorded in history: it

is possible to accept it in the mind, but not to grasp the truth of the resurrection: for to the acceptance in the mind must be added Faith. We need Faith to enable us to perfect in the spirit our comprehension of all that the resurrection means. We recall the words of St. James speaking of the need of Faith: he says, "Thou believest there is One God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble".

Doubtless the devils also believe in the rising of Christ from the grave, but they have not **Faith** in it. St. Paul wrote, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth and believe in thy heart that God raised Christ from the dead, thou shalt be saved". "Believe in thine heart!" Not believe in thy mind. St. John in his Epistle confirms this in his words, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith". Holding this Faith, there will follow all godliness of living—indeed, **must** follow—for Faith must produce "Works", godly living; and "Faith without works is dead". A living Faith will produce all righteousness and holiness, and the carrying out of the will of God in us.

We may judge ourselves and see if we are falling short of rendering to God the service which is due to Him: if we are allowing ourselves to become too much immersed in the affairs of this world: if we are negligent in praying to our Heavenly Father. Surely we shall find that the cause of any such failings and shortcomings is to be found in weakness of Faith in the resurrection, a failing to realize that Christ rose for **our** justification. He died for us and He rose for us. **And** we are risen with Him through faith in the operation of God, that operation which we received in Holy Baptism. St. Paul, in his Epistle for to-day, enforces this truth in the words, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God".

“Risen with Christ.” “Hid with Him.” What greater truth can be held by us? What higher and more exalted honour is possible? May that truth be ever held in our hearts. May that high and holy company be ever the object of our motives and our desires. The words which follow in the Epistle, “When Christ our life shall appear”, lead us—because the coming of our Lord is ever our instant hope and daily desire—to thoughts about those appearances of our Lord on that first day of the week when He rose from the grave.

From the records which have been handed down to us, we read that at the first **seeing** of the Risen Lord, she who saw Him did not recognise Him: they who first **heard** His words of comfort and enlightenment did not perceive who it was that spoke to them: at the first **presence** amongst His chosen disciples, it was a spiritual apparition they thought they saw. It is not a matter of wonder that they did not know their Lord. They had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit—as we have. They were of the natural creation only, and “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned”. So we read of the revelation of the truth granted to them in the call “Mary”: in “the breaking and blessing of bread”: and in the words “It is I myself”.

We who have received the Spirit of God should be prepared, so that we will need no such revelation. If we are “risen with Him”, if we are “hid with Him”, surely we should know it is He when He appears.