

“Certainty, joy and hope.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word, I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Christ has risen! He has risen, indeed!

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, if only we could fully understand the importance of these words. How important this truth is! The proclamation of the Great News that Jesus Christ has risen stands at the very centre of our faith.

The resurrection of Jesus means everything for us. Literally everything. This morning I invite you to reflect on three wonderful blessings that the resurrection of Jesus gives us. First it gives us **certainty**. Secondly, it fills our lives with **joy**. Thirdly, it provides for us **hope**, something surprisingly great and attractive to look forward to.

First let's reflect on certainty. Today we live in a world where everything is increasingly uncertain and unclear. It is not just that we are not in control. Everything is doubted. Everything is made more and more relative and obscure. And we struggle...

Several decades ago, there was still more or less consensus in Western civilization regarding what was right and what was wrong. Gradually these lines have been erased. We are left with countless opinions. A few years ago, those who rejected the message of Christianity argued that it is not scientific to believe such things as resurrection.

Science was looked at as the source of truth. Today many reject the very idea that the truth may exist. Even scientific enterprise itself is rejected as oppressive and bigoted. If you claim that scientifically speaking human life begins at conception, then you can be accused of being backward and not loving. So strange...

If you insist that women are those human beings who can become pregnant and the others are men, that is deemed by many as narrow minded and hateful. In the name of ultimate liberation our society marches to demolish everything, including reality itself.

But if there is no truth, if nothing is true, then where can people find certainty and stability for their lives? Because we all need it. We can't live without it. Then everyone indeed should desperately hold to whatever seemingly works for them, whatever beliefs make them feel better about themselves, less anxious, more in control, etc.

Be it astrology and horoscopes, or atheism, or some religions, Eastern or Western, or some form of meditation, or positive thinking, or some trendy spirituality, or hugging trees, or whatever else foolishness we would want to embrace. Whatever works...

But thanks be to God! We have this unshakable foundation to build our lives on! Everything that we as Christians believe hinges on this one event – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had not risen, then we too would be lost.

But praise be to God, Jesus Christ has risen! Whatever unbelievable it may seem at first. That's why Paul lists all the people, the hundreds of eyewitnesses who saw the risen Jesus, who ate and drank with Him. Most of them were alive when Paul wrote this letter.

Even as we live two millennia and thousands of miles away from those events, even today the evidence of Jesus' resurrection is overwhelming. No one can deny it, what people can and often do is – they choose to look away. But we can joyfully exclaim together with the Church Universal – Jesus has risen! And that is most certainly true!

But what does this mean for you? First, it means that Jesus indeed was who He claimed to be. The Holy God in flesh. The Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Triune God, the Divine Wisdom, the Creator came to us in the likeness of men. He came to us!

The resurrection answers the most important questions that humanity has. The questions about God. Who is He? What kind of God is He? What is His attitude towards us? Can we access Him? Now we know the answers.

He is one God and three persons. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now we know that one of the Trinity became one of us. To reveal Himself and to re-connect with us, His favourite creatures, to bring us into the wonderful divine fellowship with Himself, with our Father and the Holy Spirit. We know that He want us to know Him as our God.

Certainty... Jesus' resurrection gives us certainty that we can know what is true and good, that we can know Him, who is the Truth and the Way and the Life. And not only because we know the evidence, but also because we can and do experience the workings and the gracious presence of this risen God in our very lives; especially when we need His help the most, when there is no one else to rely on.

All of this has also very practical consequences. As Jesus has risen, and as He has revealed that He is true God, it means that also everything else in His revelation, in the Bible, is true. And that brings us to our second point.

Joy. Divine joy. Yes, the resurrection of Jesus fills our lives with joy, and with meaning, and with significance, and with beauty and more. This is what it does. Because it reveals to us this wonderful and clear picture of who we are and why we are here.

These are the questions that today plague and torture our society. Who am I? Who are we as human beings? Why are we here? Many in our contemporary society have completely lost it, they don't know the answers anymore. Perhaps never did.

But we all need to know these answers, otherwise this life becomes something like meaningless wandering in darkness; you exist, yes, but "who am I?" and "why am I here?" – these desperate cries remain unanswered.

The resurrection, on the other hand, provides for us the most joyful and colourful picture of who we are and why we are here. You are not some accidental lumps of cells. You are not some suffering souls locked in the prison of this mortal body. You are not worthless.

You are God's favourite creatures. You are created in His own image and likeness. Infinitely precious. You are created for greatness and glory. You are designed and placed here on earth for magnificent tasks and responsibilities.

You are God's co-workers in being fruitful and multiplying and filling this planet, in exploring and understanding it, in taking care of it and discovering its full potential. This knowledge informs us – what relationships and responsibilities we are designed for and what sort of life will bring us true fulfilment and happiness.

Today in our society the pursuit of happiness is one of the driving forces behind everything our society does, and still ... because we reject the risen Jesus, it seems that there are more unhappy, hurting, depressed and desperate people than ever.

And we also know why, we know what is wrong with us. It is not those people who think differently. This is such a common assumption these days – "we are right and good and virtuous, and those who disagree with us are the cause of all problems."

We know that it is our condition, our broken relationships and alienation from our God that is the root of all problems. We have lost the bond that is at the very heart of who we are – beloved creatures of God, and so we have lost part of our very humanity.

But we also know where the cure is, or rather – who is the cure. Our crucified and risen God Jesus Christ. He has defeated not only sin that separates us from God, but also our greatest enemy – death, and He wants us to participate in His victory. He now has all the authority in heaven and on earth, and He desires to share His glory with us. He wants us to be with Him. He wants you to be with Him! How can we not rejoice?!

Which leads to our last point. **Hope.** There is no life without hope. Hopeless life is miserable, depressing and empty. Everyone wants, everyone needs to hope for something. Having hope changes everything. But then, sure, there are different hopes.

There are hopes for this life. We all have some, but if we have lived long enough, we have learned that no earthly hope ever delivers what we truly long for in our hearts. Everything ends up being too small, too insignificant, quickly fading away.

What is the problem? Should we toil harder? The problem, so to speak, is that you are created for something much greater, much more intense, much more beautiful and exciting, therefore nothing in this age can fully satisfy the longings of your hearts.

But then there is this other hope – Christian hope, divine hope, that is much larger than this life. The hope which we have because of the resurrection of Jesus. With His resurrection He has revealed to us where we are heading, if we are traveling with Him.

Through this life, which sometimes feels great and sometimes like the valley of darkness and gloom, then through the death itself, which awaits us all... and then – to that new age, to that new life, where your deepest longings will finally be fulfilled.

This new life awaits you with new resurrected bodies, full of energies of life and divine wisdom, strong and beautiful, prepared for the life eternal in the company of all God's saints, and in the very presence of our Triune God Himself.

This is where you will see Jesus as He is, where you will be made like Him, whoever we are in this life, and where you will reign with Him over this new creation forever. Everything that hinders your joy and happiness in this age, will be gone.

Listen to the Spirit: "You shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike you, nor any scorching heat [...] and God will wipe away every tear from your eyes." (Rev 7:16-17) "And death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:4)

Seeing our victorious God Jesus, we will exclaim together with countless multitudes of our brothers and sisters: "Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Rev 7:12)

Christ has risen! He has risen, indeed!

And that makes the whole difference. It gives you **certainty and confidence, peace and clarity** in this confused and wandering world. It fills your life with **divine joy and excitement**, with **meaning and significance**, and the radiant beams of this wonderful **Christian hope** shine into your hearts as you look into your future. All of this is given to you by our Risen Lord Jesus. That is His gift to you today!

For He has risen. He has risen, indeed!

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen.