

Life out of the Impossible

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Life; Resurrection; The Israelites cross the Red Sea / John 20:1–18; Exodus 14:10–15:1

- › Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!
- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Risen and Victorious King. Amen.

It was a scary time. They had just left Egypt and now they are looking back and the Israelites see Pharaoh and his army coming upon them. And looking ahead they see a massive body of water, the Red Sea. It looked like there was no hope for them. It looked like they were going to die in the wilderness.

It is a scary time. We aren't between Pharaoh and the waters of the Red Sea, but we are at a point in our lives that none of us have ever experienced. We've never been in a Pandemic like this with a virus that no one has ever had before. It is a scary time. Every cough and snuffle that someone has you look at them differently. It's scary. I get it! It's rough. The emotions are real!

It was a lonely couple of days. The disciples and others were locked away behind the doors of the Upper Room where they had celebrated the Last Supper. Now their Lord is dead. Their teacher is gone. They aren't just alone, they are also afraid...afraid that their lives were next. They were afraid of the unknown.

Now we too are in a time of loneliness and isolation. We seem to be locked up with those closest to us. We are also afraid, afraid of the unknown. Afraid of what the next day will bring. We might also think...I feel so alone...where is our Savior.

The Israelites and the disciples and those closest to Jesus are seemingly caught in impossible situations. And to some extent so are we! For Israel, for the disciples, the women, and for us...there's no way out of this on our own. We can't do it.

And the partial good news is that we don't have to do it on our own. The fuller good news is this: You have someone that brings life out of the impossible circumstances.

That's the promise. Our God: the Triune God brings life out of impossible circumstances. Look at the Old Testament lesson. It looked as if they were dead outside of the water. They were complaining that they were caught between a rock and hard place. They thought they were going to die in the Wilderness. Their faith was already wandering. Their trust was already wavering. They were thinking they were going to die in the wilderness.

Moses responds to these fearful Israelites and says:

"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

And then the Lord says:

"Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. 16 Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground."

The impossible is happening. God is delivering the Israelites. Later in the Old Testament Reading we see the dry land appear where the waters were, the Israelite walk across it safely and then the Lord lets the waters down on top of the Egyptians. Life sure came out of the impossible here. Moses began a great song singing, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously!" Indeed He has and the Lord continues to triumph gloriously. The True God: the Triune God brings life out of the impossible.

Now to the Gospel account. It was very early on Sunday morning, it was still dark and Mary Magdalene saw something that didn't make sense...she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb. Something just didn't seem right. There was no body of Jesus. She ran to Peter and John and told them:

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

She didn't know. I am sure she was a bit afraid, probably getting close to despair, the body of her Lord that she was going to anoint was gone!

Later on we see Mary weeping outside the tomb. She was saddened. Her emotions were like a roller coaster. Her emotions were very much grief stricken. She was weeping as she stooped to look into the tomb.

Maybe you are there right now. Grief-stricken. On an emotional roller coaster. I can tell you, that that is where I am at. My emotions are wild right now. I typically come to church on Easter early to pray and reflect, before I gather together with you and greet you with the greeting, "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" And hear the reply, "He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!" We sing the great Easter hymns of the church together. There is typically great joy on Easter Morning...no matter the weather. Let me tell you this...the emotional roller coaster is real. Your feelings are different right now. Easter feels different, but it's no different. We are all Mary right now! We are stooping at the tomb wondering where Jesus is. We don't see Him. It's hard I get it.

Mary Magdalene as she weeping and looking in the tomb, she sees two angels in white and they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She answers them with her voice quaking and you can hear the tears in her voice:

They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Mary and the other women that aren't named here, Peter, John, and the other disciples are wondering. Things were looking quite impossible for them. Just days later their teacher, their Lord, their friend Jesus died a horrific death on the cross. Seeing things as impossible is quite accurate. And now as she says those very words she turns around and this person who she thought was the gardener said these words:

"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

And she responds:

"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

But then there's one words that changes the impossibility for her. Jesus says to her...and I picture him with a look of deep compassion. The eyes are eyes of a loving shepherd. And he says to her: "Mary" At that moment, with that very word, her name...she knows that their is life out of the impossible. She then runs to the disciples and says, "I have seen the Lord". She proclaims that Jesus Christ is alive.

Mary had several moments where she saw that life came out of the impossible. In other accounts of the resurrection we hear that Mary and the other women came to the tomb, see the tomb rolled away and then they see the angels saying, "Do not be afraid. You are looking for Jesus who was crucified for you. He is not here. He is risen from the dead!" He is Risen! Words to cling by. Words that show you, just as it showed Mary and the other women that life comes out of the impossible.

Jesus Christ is alive! That sure is life out of the impossible. At least in our eyes. Jesus Christ is alive! He's alive for you!

There's one more impossibility that Jesus Christ brings life out of. You are by nature sinful and unclean and so am I. By our sinfulness we are destined to die eternally. Who would think that a sinful being could have life? Rest assured that is the promise that Christ has made for you. You will live. That's the Easter promise. Christ Jesus is alive for you! Christ Jesus through his death and resurrection brings forgiveness, life and salvation for you! What a blessing!

Dear Church, maybe there are some listening today that don't have connection to the church, this message for you, it's for all of us. We are living in days that are full of fear, anxiety, and grief. There was even points where some were saying that Easter was cancelled, which could have had an even greater emotional response. Easter is not cancelled. Jesus is alive! Our traditions and celebrations of Easter are different. Jesus is alive! The reason we celebrate Easter is still true. It's the fact that life comes out of the impossible. The greatest truth is this: Jesus Christ is alive! He's alive for you. He's the one that through His resurrection gives you hope and comfort.

I can tell you there is a day coming when this Pandemic will end...do I know when? NO. But I do know that God is in control and he will bring life out of the impossible. Will that life happen in this day and age? I don't know. What I do know there is coming a day that Christ is coming back and we will be fully free from disease, destruction, despair, and death.

Dear Church: Jesus Christ is alive for you! Jesus Christ is for you. Jesus Christ will bring something wonderful out of this time of impossibility. One of those wonderful things for you even now is that Jesus Christ is not socially distant from you. He is there as you worship with your families! He is with all of you! He is with you because He is alive.

Rest in that assurance that Jesus Christ is alive for you!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen and Victorious Lord and Savior. Amen.