

Jesus lives Jesus saves

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[0 : 00] Jesus risen and alive is at the heart of the Christian gospel. On Easter Day the church around the world tends to remember especially the great glory of Jesus rising from the dead.

I think we will all agree that it would be a poor do if it was only on one day of the year that we remember the great fact that Jesus is alive.

But let us be thankful together this morning that we can remember that Jesus Christ who was once dead and buried rose from the dead and is alive since then and is alive today.

Why is that important to us? Well the great practical import of Jesus alive and alive from the dead. The great practical import for each one of us here this morning is that the Bible makes clear that if Jesus is alive then Jesus can save.

[1 : 24] Or if Jesus is alive from the dead then Jesus is God's saviour for sinners like you and me.

If Jesus has risen from the dead. If Jesus has risen from the dead the Bible makes the argument that that is the final evidence. That Jesus is salvation that Jesus is salvation that Jesus is alive from the dead.

That Jesus is God's promised saviour. That if we are going to be delivered from our sin that would mean that we must be cast away from God's presence in death and death eternal forever.

Then it is salvation through Jesus alone that can deliver us. You can go to the beginning of the epistle to the Romans for instance.

That great epistle where the apostle Paul that we are thinking about this morning where he gives a very detailed account of how a person, how someone like you or like me can be saved.

[2 : 36] How we can be saved. How we can be saved. How we can be saved. How we can be saved. How we can be given the assurance of forgiveness and an entry into heaven at the end of our lives.

As Paul explains how that salvation can be ours. He begins in the first five verses of Romans. It would be good I think to read them perhaps when you go home.

He explains that his authority for giving this good news. Is that Jesus has risen. That's the evidence that Jesus really is God's son.

That's the evidence that all that God promised in Jesus has come to pass. And it's sure and certain. And it's the alive and risen Jesus who can really save.

And the story of the salvation. The conversion. The becoming a Christian.

[3 : 41] Of the great apostle Paul. That story is just one evidence in the Bible. That Jesus alive means that Jesus saves.

And we want to investigate that a little bit further and see how it happens. The first thing that the story tells us is that Jesus saves from sin.

We meet the apostle Paul. At least he was to become the apostle Paul. He is still known by his Jewish name Saul.

And we meet him in this story as a persecutor. Of the new Christian church. We also know from Paul's own record.

Indeed his record as he wrote to the Philippians. That incidentally we have been looking at in the church here on Sunday evening. We know why it was that Paul did go in for this persecuting of the Christian church.

[4 : 49] It was because of his zeal for being right with God. Although he was a persecutor of the church.

Paul was a religious man. He had known much of the God of the Old Testament. Who of course is the same God of the New Testament.

The God who has written the Bible. And Paul had worked out no doubt under the teaching of the Pharisees of the day.

That he must work a way to be right with God. By his own efforts. And that's what made Jesus and his followers such an abomination to Paul.

Who were saying that a man is made right with God. By faith. By trusting in what another does for them. Not what they might do for themselves.

[5 : 52] Paul believed that he was right with God. By obeying the command in his own strength. As best as he could.

And so he persecuted the church. As those who were against such a way of being right with God. But whatever was on the outside.

Paul had no peace. On the inside. Now peace is that fruit. That effect.

That we must expect. Will be the effect of a man who is right with God. A man who is right with God. A woman who is right with God. A young person who is right in the presence of God. Knows the peace of God. God is right. And he has not.

[6 : 55] God is right with God. God is pleased with the person who is right. Who is accepted in his presence. He has the hope of God's blessing. He can be at peace with God.

Paul professed that he was putting such effort into doing what he believed pleased God that he was right with God that he had no peace I don't know if we would have noticed that if we had met Paul at that time even if we had been a close friend of Paul at that time I don't know if we would have noticed that but Jesus knew it Jesus who knows the heart knew it and he said to Paul that day Paul or Saul as he was still told it's hard for you to kick against the place you're one thing on the outside but inside Paul you're finding it hard to keep up appearances there's a warning there for us all we may all need Jesus today to tell us and to convince us what a futile work it is to keep up appearances if things are quite different inside it's a dangerous thing you know we can get so practiced that keeping up appearances that will satisfy other people people that these appearances begin to satisfy ourselves but they never satisfy God who knows our heart be careful be careful and let me be careful that we don't get so practiced at keeping up appearances for other people that we begin to believe it and forget about the reality of our hearts that Jesus knows and as he knew Saul he knows us also and if it's a case of working things out to be right with God by our own efforts there will never be a real peace inside it's true of us all that there's an uneasiness we may not even be noticing it we've become so practiced at this work of putting the effort in to keep things right on the outside but the Bible makes clear that somewhere deep down or maybe rising to the surface as it was with Paul at this time there's an uneasiness

Paul tells us about it later on he tells us about it in Romans in the very first chapter where he's telling us that you see we were made in the image of God we were made to be right with God and no matter how we've gone wrong by our sin and our wrongdoing and our determination to do things our own way there's a paradox within there's a contradiction within the truth of the way we were created is down there somewhere and there's this tension and this uneasiness and so Paul goes on to say the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven I've chosen the NIV translation here because I think it's helpful the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth that's what the original word really means who suppress the truth by their wickedness since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them in the way he has created us and we may be trying our best or perhaps I should say you may be trying your best today to work out a way of salvation to work at being right with God and having some peace with God that all will be well at the end maybe you've been working at it for 50, 60, 70, 80 years for all we know you'll become quite practiced at it but you can only do it by suppressing the truth you've got a conscience you see that was given to you by the way that Jesus first created you because the Bible tells us that it's Jesus who is the God who created us all things were made by him the Bible tells us he is the living God our creator and he is alive today even when he became man death couldn't hold him he lives on and you have to suppress that peace to get some sort of peace to keep you going and that's your condition today under the anger and the wrath of God if it is that you have not yet returned to Jesus with your sins as Paul met with Jesus that day don't kid yourself today that you have peace with God if you are still resisting the claims of Jesus Christ that was Jesus' word to Paul you're still in your sin no matter your efforts you have no peace it's hard for you to kick against the tricks until you return and do business with me you see Paul

had to come to that point of admitting that he was wrong the great student of the scriptures who I suppose knew the Old Testament scriptures back to front he certainly shows great ability in his letters to use and apply the Old Testament scriptures at this point I am sure that he knew them well and he had found a way by his own ingenuity of using these scriptures to be right with God on the Damascus road Paul had to lose faith and to confess I'm wrong he tells us that also in Philippians chapter 10 those things that were gained to me the way of getting away of having some peace and being right with God

I had gone into it in a great way in a diligent way and I thought that I had it all cracked that those things that were gained and the things that were at the very heart of the way I lived I had to lose faith I had to admit that I was wrong not only that these things weren't gained but that they were actually lost they were keeping me away from knowing Jesus and that day when Jesus spoke to me I had to confess that and if you're in the same condition as Saul was when he set out on that journey from Jerusalem to Damascus if you're in that condition today you must lose faith you must lose faith if you're going to be a Christian if you're going to be saved

[16:30] I hope that I'm not saying that in any proud or arrogant way I hope that all who are already Christians here this morning are not being tempted by the evil one to rise up and stand superior air against any who may be sitting near you who are not the Lord there is not a Christian here this morning that has had to lose faith there is not a Christian here this morning but whether it happened suddenly or whether it happened gradually has come to the realisation that once I was going my own way and I have had to admit that it was the wrong way and that I can only go the right way by bowing before Jesus just like Saul of Tarsus did long ago whether I see bright lights or not it's the Jesus who is alive who rebukes me for neglecting him and going my own way and that brings us to the second point it is the Jesus who is alive who rebukes us because when a person is saved just as it was with the Apostle Paul yes the details may be very different but when a person is saved by the

Jesus who is alive Jesus saves them personally he meets with them person to person again although the circumstances the details the details of our conversion will vary so much this morning those of us who are the Lord's there will be no one here who is the Lord's this morning that will confess that they have met with Jesus personally and that they do meet with him that we do meet with him person to person day by day by day since the first time that he came and saved us some of us are not even aware of the first time he came sometimes he comes much more quietly than the way he came to soul it took us a while to realize that Jesus in his living person had come to us and had saved us and was walking with us how he comes is not the important thing but that he comes is absolutely essential

Paul makes that clear in his later references to his own experience and Paul as he writes in the Bible is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so it's the truth 1 Corinthians 15 he talks about Jesus and the history of his life he says he was buried and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures and he was seen of Cephas or Peter and then he was seen of the twelve and last of all he was seen of me also as of one born out of due time just as really as Peter and the other disciples met with him in the flesh on the day of the resurrection on the first Easter day so Paul was convinced that just as really although the circumstances were different he had met with the same living alive Lord Jesus Christ and so Paul then goes on to preach in 2 Corinthians that it's the same for all who become

Christians they may not meet with him physically face to face but they meet with him nevertheless really person to person if our gospel be hid he says it is hid to them that are lost in whom the God of this world have blinded their minds that's what's wrong with you this morning if you're not a Christian your eyes have been blinded by the evil one you don't recognize Jesus as Lord and God and meet with him and walk with him and serve him he's somebody vague he's somebody in the distance he's somebody you know about he's somebody maybe that you believe about but that personal encounter that personal walk with him you don't have it but when a person is converted when a person becomes a

Christian that's always what happens Paul goes on yes the gospel is hid because of our minds and darkness because of our sin but that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ what happens is that God comes in his son Jesus and gives us the light to see to see with the eye of faith just as Paul saw with the physical eye on the road to Damascus again I say that everyone

who is the Lord's here this morning would profess to that that sooner or later there has come that conviction that Jesus is alive that he really did die for sin on the cross and conquered it that he really is able to deal with my sin and I can trust in him as a living person and walk with him and be sure that he will never leave me and never forsake me notice

[23 : 18] Jesus personal approach to Paul here notice the way he comes and he speaks to him by name the name that he was born with the name that presumably he was still using that he was recognized by the name of intimacy of someone who knew him soul soul he sees to the apostle and immediately Paul knows that here is someone who knows him here is someone who knows about him who knows his need why are you persecuting me it's hard for you to kick against the prince and perhaps it's interesting to notice that it was in reply to Paul's question Lord who art thou that Jesus replies I am Jesus whom you are persecuting it is hard for you perhaps nobody else in the world knew that it was hard for Paul he certainly wasn't giving any outward evidence that it was hard for him to persecute the church but Jesus knew did Jesus add these words to give to Paul the recognition that he was dealing with the risen Lord who knew him that's who you have to deal with this morning if you're to be saved

I hope that you will recognize comfort in that yes your sin has to be dealt with by and amongst your sins just as amongst mine there will be sins deep down that you've perhaps forgotten about that you prefer to forget about you can bring them to Jesus oh let's pray for people in high position who are having their sin exposed in these days whether truthfully or untruthfully oh that they along with ourselves would recognize that there's a Jesus who knows the real truth about them just as he knows the real truth about you about you and about me yes a frightening thought but strangely a comforting thought because if we will go to him for our salvation he knows it all already he's not going to be shocked by the sin that we have to confess by the sin that we have to ask him to save us from he's not going to be shocked he wasn't shocked with

Paul's sin terrible though it was Paul himself says that in saving him Jesus showed that he was able to save to the uttermost whatever is the problem that you have with your sin this morning Jesus knows it he may not demand that you confess it to anyone else he may but he may not but he certainly demands that you confess it to him and if you do he will receive you kindly he knows it already and he will save you and then Jesus also gave a personal introduction of himself

I am Jesus whom you're persecuting you're persecuting the church because you're persecuting me now the church is preaching that I died for sin and that I rose from the dead I'm that Jesus I'm the Jesus Paul that you're staying away from that you're trying to go in the opposite direction from because you don't want to face that to the fact that you need a Jesus who died on the cross for you but I'm that Jesus and if you're going to be saved this morning you'll have to face up to that Jesus in the same way that Paul did like Paul you also need the son of

God dying and dead for you on the cross that's what your sin is in the sight of a holy God it can only be taken away by the sacrifice the substitute God's son taking your place that's God's word it's not my word that Jesus dead for you is lifted up this morning and the living Jesus would probe into your heart and you must be willing to confess yes only this only such a sacrifice only the power of the living Christ can deliver me from my sins and bring me peace with God and when you accept that you will find one last thing just as

[29 : 53] Paul did you will find that Jesus saves us Lord verse 6 and he that saw trembling and astonished said Lord Jesus whom he had been persecuted now trembling and astonished he says Lord that's the evidence of a life changed by the power of the living Lord Jesus Christ that's the evidence that Paul was realizing oh he had so much more to learn he leaves the experience blind having to be led by the hand there is so much yet that Paul has to learn and to discover that he knows that Jesus is the one alone who can save him he knows that Jesus is Lord Lord he bows before him he surrenders to Jesus that's what you need to do this morning if you're not a

Christian oh surely you see in the conversion of Saul the living Jesus as the Jesus who is worth trusting he's good he's so good that he goes after Paul the persecutor and saves him to the uttermost and forgives all his sin that's the sort of Lord and Saviour that Jesus is why will you rebel against him any longer why will you keep resisting him and at the same time know in the depths of your heart that you cannot be sure that you have peace with God will you not surrender to him yes with all your nervousness about what may be ahead in the future will you not surrender nervous and sure of yourself but sure of Jesus will you not say to him this morning and mean it and believe it my Lord and my

God Amen