

**“HE WAS, AND IS . . . RISEN”**  
**(Mark 16:1-7, John 20:1-10, Matthew 28:11-15, Luke 24:36-49)**

4.21.19

## INTRODUCTION

He is risen [He is risen indeed!].

This past weekend, Tiger Woods became the second oldest player to win the Masters golf tournament. This was the fifth time he had won this particular tournament, but his first win there since 2005, and it was his first win in a major golf championship since 2008. Since his last win, he had endured personal issues and a broken marriage (the tabloids loved him), and several surgeries on a body that had become broken simply because of the ferocious way he would swing a golf club. By 2017, he needed a nerve block just to sit in a chair. The first time he swung a driver after his final surgery and the rehab that came with it, he drove his golf ball 90 yards — this from a guy that used to routinely outdrive every other player on the pro tour. For awhile, many people, including himself, thought he may never be able to play competitive golf again. And then came last weekend. And the stories began almost immediately about how he had “resurrected” his career — meaning that his golfing career had literally been dead and buried until he brought it all back to life, culminating in his stirring victory at Augusta.

That’s how many people would define and use the word “resurrection” in today’s world — a comeback against all odds. But our world’s attempt to define “resurrection” in its own terms is not even a faint copy of what it truly means, and what we celebrate today. For all the greatness of his comeback, Tiger Woods remained alive — injured but still breathing. In fact, while his career was up for grabs, his life was never at risk. But where the world fails, the Bible succeeds; it gives us the definitive story of the greatest moment in human history — a resurrection that still reverberates 2,000 years after it occurred, and will continue to impact us throughout all eternity, and it all boils down to this: an empty tomb, a missing body. Some two thousand years ago, a couple of disciples, a few women, some Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders were all tied together by that reality, and by one pressing question: What do we do with this? That’s still the question, for everybody. What do we do with that empty tomb, that missing body? We’ve already heard the Biblical texts that tell the story. So, let’s move on to evaluating what the resurrection of Jesus Christ means for us all:

## APPLICATION

Christ’s resurrection is THE pivotal event in human history. It is the very foundation upon which all Christianity is built. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ didn’t really happen, the entire faith collapses. The apostle Paul said as much in his first letter to the church at Corinth: ***If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is futile and so is your faith — Paul, I Corinthians 15:13-14.*** Why is that a big deal? As Paul goes on to say: ***[I]f Christ has not been raised . . . you are still in your sins — Paul, I Corinthians 15:17.*** In other words, God still sees me as the same sinner I was before Jesus died. If the

resurrection is a false premise, then, as Paul says: ***If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied — Paul, I Corinthians 15:19.***

But, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ is true, then that moment stands alone as representing the ultimate victory for all mankind, showing in three different areas:

First, Christ's resurrection represents victory over sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden by disobeying God's command, much more happened than their own personal loss of paradise. As Paul told it: ***[S]in entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned — Paul, Romans 5:12.*** All of the humanity that followed Adam and Eve now came with sin as an integral part of their very lives. As Paul had observed with those Christians in Rome: ***[A]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God — Paul, Romans 3:23.*** This is not a uniquely NT idea; the OT is also full of multiple references to the reality that, by our own selfish choices, mankind acquired a debilitating disease called sin:

David once wrote: ***The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one — David, Psalm 14:2-3.***

King Solomon agreed with his father, noting in Ecclesiastes that ***there is no one on earth . . . who does what is right and never sins — Ecclesiastes 7:20.***

In fact, David took that idea one step further; when he was confessing to God his sin with Bathsheba, he said: ***Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me — David, Psalm 51:5.***

And for all those who say, "Hey, wait a minute; I'm a good person, I do good things," the prophet Isaiah kind of puts a pin in that "balloon," telling us: ***All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away — Isaiah 64:6.*** Yes, we are capable of good, but that still hasn't taken care of the sin issue we all have. Apart from a solution for our sins, the moments we're good mean nothing.

And it was the apostle James in the NT who clarified the impossibility of any human being achieving the sinless life that was the only possible way of pleasing a holy, righteous, perfect God: ***[W]hoever keeps the whole law (God's revealed standard of holiness and behavior) and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it — James 2:10.***

But that's exactly what Jesus Christ, God's only Son, accomplished: He satisfied God's standards in that He lived a perfect, sinless, holy life in every way — in actions, in words, in thoughts and in attitudes — absolutely living a life, as the apostle Peter noted, as ***a lamb without blemish or defect — I Peter 1:19b,*** and then offered that perfection on the cross, dying that I might have the opportunity to claim His sinless life for myself. Jesus took all my sins upon Himself, that I could have all His perfection placed upon myself. As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: ***God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God — Paul, II Corinthians 5:21.*** As a result, if I surrender my life to Jesus Christ, thereby claiming the perfection

that He offers, God treats my sins in the way that David told us in Psalm 103: *[A]s far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us — David, Psalm 103:12*. In fact, the prophet Isaiah (who is echoed by the prophet Jeremiah) had God Himself to describe what He has done with our sins as a result of our surrender to His son: *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more. . . . I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you” — God speaking, Isaiah 43:25, 44:22*. In other words, as David noted, *[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve — David, Psalm 103:10a*. Our sins deserve wrath, but God has instead given us His grace — His undeserved favor towards us — and His love, offering us another outcome for our lives through His Son Jesus Christ, with our sins dealt with in an incredible way!

Second, Christ’s resurrection represents victory over death. But to be sure, to truly appreciate this victory, we need to understand that nobody dies. In the human being way, yeah; people die in the sense that we used to see them active in our world and now we don’t. All my grandparents, in that context, have died. But at the same time, none of my grandparents have died.

Here’s the story as Paul tells it: *[T]he wages (what we have earned) is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord — Paul, Romans 6:23*. Now the “death” to which Paul is referring is not physical death, but spiritual death, which the Bible tells us means eternal separation from God. Jesus said the same thing while He was in the middle of a conversation with a man named Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees and one of the brightest, best-educated men in all Israel. Jesus told him: *“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” — Jesus Christ, John 3:3*. He then went on to explain what being “born again”: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” — Jesus Christ, John 3:16*. Again, “perish” does not mean the end of existence but rather an eternal existence separated from the presence of God. Bottom line: Nobody dies; you see, eternity is not about duration but rather destination, and physical death is simply a transition to the spiritual state in which you will spend eternity, but your life — your awareness of who you are and the life you’ve lived — will continue forever.

Now this is where Jesus comes in. The Bible does not teach a “universal salvation” where everybody on the planet is guaranteed heaven simply because “God is love.” He absolutely is, but God is also just. He cannot simply let sin go; it has to be dealt with. Two thousand years ago, He did that by directing all His wrath at sin upon His Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus hung on the cross, He was there as mankind’s substitute, taking everybody’s wrath by taking everybody’s sin. That is a universal gift — but mankind has the choice of surrendering to the gift or turning it down.

But because of the resurrection, all those who have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ no longer need to have any fear of death, for physical death has simply become the means by which we are ushered into the very presence of God, as Paul said so wonderfully, *away from the body and at home with the Lord — Paul, II Corinthians*

**5:8b.** Because of what we celebrate on Easter Sunday, we can celebrate with Paul: *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead . . . For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive* — Paul, *I Corinthians 15:20a, 22.*

And third (and last), Christ's resurrection represents victory over NOW. What do I mean by that? Simply this: Because Jesus walked out of that tomb on Easter morning, I can know He's alive to walk every moment of every day with me. He said so Himself: *"[S]urely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* — Jesus Christ, *Matthew 28:20b.* Because of His constant accompaniment and leading with my life, the days I have on earth, no matter the challenges, can always be lived on a foundation of joy. You know how, at the end of championship-winning games (the Super Bowl or the Stanley Cup), when you see the teammates being overwhelmed with happiness, even though the game is still going on? That is because their victory is assured; they are so far in front that there is not enough time left for the other team to make a comeback. Their joy is in being assured of the outcome — they've WON! Because of the resurrection, I can know victory, even though my life is still being played out. As David celebrated: *Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you* — David, *Psalms 39:7.*

**THE "FINGER DRILL."** So back to the question we asked on the front end regarding the resurrection: What do we do with this? Well, here's a picture of what we've been given, and what this can mean for each and every one of us.

**CONCLUSION** — One more thing we can know:

"Dear Lord,

Lest I continue my complacent way, help me to remember that somewhere, somehow out there a Man died for me today. As long as there be war, I then must ask and answer: Am I worth dying for?"

— A poem carried in the purse of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt from World War II until the day she died

Have you ever thought about that? Am I worth dying for? What all the events of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter tell us is that, according to God, everyone here is loved; everyone here has a value beyond imagination. How do I know that? You, me, each one of us, was determined by Jesus Christ to be worth dying for. Your life has that much value. God desires to spend eternity with you. Jesus' death and resurrection makes that possible.

As we head into COMMUNION, it is a valid time to ask the question: Have you claimed the gift that God gave us in His Son, Jesus Christ? Have you claimed that gift that allows God to see you as if you had never sinned? I can think of no better time than today, not because it's Easter, but because this is a day God is knocking on the door of your heart. He wants to come in. He wants to make all these resurrection blessings possible. But He's not going to knock the door down; that's not His way. He's waiting for you to open it. Today can be that day!