

A Prayer on Easter Sunday

Our God and our Father, we thank You for Your wonderful grace. By Your grace, each of us has experienced You in some way. And the more we know You and Your Word to us, the more we realize how amazing You are. Speak to our hearts, Father. Together with one heart, we want to strive to know You. In the daily grind and routine of life, we are often blinded, and see nothing. And so we are bored in life, and we let our hearts grow cold with each passing day. Father, revive us, restore us, resurrect us! Father, may we indeed rise up to love You and to serve You. Hear our prayer, as we commit this precious time into Your hands. We pray for Your glory's sake.

Amen

The Midas Touch

You would have all heard of King Midas. It's a story from Greek mythology. He made a special request to the gods, "Do me a favor. This is what I really want. Grant me this one desire."

Do you remember how the story goes? The gods really did give him what he so desired!

What about you? If you were to be granted that one wish, that one desire, what would you ask for?

What did Midas ask for? He asked for the golden touch. He asked that anything he touched would turn into gold. And he was granted his wish. He touches a rock, and lo and behold, it turns to solid gold!

He reached for his sceptre, and it turned to pure gold. Everything he touched became gold.

Imagine if anything you touched turned to gold. So many of us slog from morning till night, and what do we get for all our hard work? A pitiful amount of money. Imagine if this desire were to come true for you — whatever you touch would turn to gold. That would really solve a lot of life's problems, wouldn't it? King Midas was delirious with joy as he went around touching everything in the palace.

Well, if you remember the story, there was one thing he did not foresee. At some point, he felt hungry, so he reached for food but it turned to gold. Why, of course. It was a tragedy, really. So that's the tragic story of King Midas — the man with the golden touch.

The Jesus Touch

There is a story about another king, who also asked God for a favor. His one desire — do you know what it was?

If you had one wish, one desire above all else, what would you ask for?

This king asked that whatever he touched would bring about life.

And God granted him his wish. He came across a leper and decided he would touch the leper. Of course, no one ever goes near a leper because you would get infected. The leper was healed by his touch! Someone took him to see a woman, sick in bed with a very high fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her instantly. He touched the eyes of the blind and their eyes were opened. He touched the deaf and the deaf began to hear. Just one touch. Amazing!

By now you are wondering if the ultimate would take place. What if he touched a dead body?

Well, one day he happened to pass by a funeral procession. He saw the dead boy's mother weeping and he was so moved that he reached out and touched the coffin. To everyone's astonishment, the boy sat up and began to speak.

Even the dead come to life!

That's simply amazing! There is no greater power in this world than the power to raise the dead.

We live in the days of incredible scientific progress. In the field of medical science, sicknesses and diseases once thought incurable can now be cured with modern-day remedies. However, doctors have still not figured out how to prevent death. Research has so far resulted in the ability to prolong life. There is some measure of success with postponing death, but despite all the advances made so far, they have not found the ultimate solution: How to prevent death?

There's a science called cryogenics, which studies how materials are affected in extremely low temperatures. Then from that, there's cryonics, which is where they put the dead body in deep freeze in the hope that one day — maybe a few hundred years — medical science will be so advanced that they will be able to bring the dead person back to life. Well, for this service, you would have to pay about US\$200,000 now. It's called cryopreservation. Some people are willing to pay for that hope. Perhaps one day they will find the answer to life.

Yet here we are, holding the answer in our hands! We have the answer that the whole of human history and progress and science

has not achieved. Many of us do not realise the kind of power that we possess, and the kind of message that we can present to the world.

Today is Easter Sunday. And we all know that Jesus was resurrected on the third day, but what has it got to do with us?

What does Easter mean to you? What does Christ's resurrection mean to you?

This event occurred some 2000 years ago. Were you there? No. Did you witness the resurrection of Christ? No.

Then, do you believe in the resurrection of Christ? You weren't there. So how is it that you can believe in the resurrection of Christ? Why are you so sure? How can you be so sure?

You see, as Christians, it has been drummed into our heart and our minds. "Jesus died. He rose again." It's like a mantra. We don't really know what we are saying.

How do you know that the resurrection is true?

In the time that I have been given, I would like to approach this in two ways. These two ways to know how it is true will have profound implications to your life. And mine.

Is the resurrection true? The reality of the past

The first approach is this: The physical resurrection occurred in the past, and we know that God raised Jesus from the dead. It was by God's power, that Jesus was raised from the dead. The Scriptures

tells us this many times. That was the past. Can God not do the same today? It's the same God, the same power. Can He do it?

Well, the answer is yes! In fact, there are many modern-day miracles of resurrection from the dead, and these have been attested.

Here is a video clip from the Associated Press.

<https://youtu.be/XV5mLj2-K-0?si=2zz2HNc4iJyeqKNJ>

I'll summarise what happened to this lady, Val Thomas. Her heart stopped. What happens is — there's a phenomenon called rigor mortis — that when a person dies, the body starts to harden. And that is what started to happen to her — rigor mortis set in. They tried to revive her. For at least 15 minutes, she had no pulse, and she was without oxygen. There were no signs of neurological function. Since they were open to organ donation, her body was prepared for that eventuality, which means they keep the body on life support, and at lower temperatures so the organs do not deteriorate. For seventeen and a half hours, there was no brain activity. When doctors told the family she had a less than 10 percent chance of survival, the family made the agonizing decision of taking her off the life support. They said their goodbyes and prayed.

As the nurses were taking off the tubes, she came alive! After seventeen and a half hours of no brain activity, she was now alive!

As you can see in the news clip, her sons were really praying for her. And she rose from the dead. Imagine that! You have given up, and your thoughts are onto donating her organs. But, in answer to prayer, God raises her up from the dead.

I've got another story, one from missionaries in Guatemala, Central America. They had been going round from village to village, faithfully

witnessing to the Kingdom of God. However, their evangelistic efforts were going nowhere. No one wanted to listen to them. And in the end, one of them simply asked a villager, "Is there anything we can do for you? Is there anything you would like us to pray for?" And the young woman pointed them towards a shack, and they saw a little child, all wrapped up. In fact, she had given birth to a stillborn baby 27 hours earlier. The baby had already turned purple, and it was stiff. This group of five missionaries gathered around the baby, praying and crying. At one point one of them cried out, "Lord, I believe You will raise this child from the dead." And to their utter amazement, the child started to move, and then it gave a little cough and began to cry. As soon as the mother heard the coughing and crying, she rushed to the shack where her baby had been placed. You know, the baby's body was covered with burial cloth. In her astonishment, she picked up her baby and ran through the village, shouting and telling everyone what had happened. The whole village came out and asked the missionaries, "Tell us which god you prayed to." The missionaries replied, "We pray to the Greatest, the God of all."

These missionaries had tried so hard, but to no avail. And now, as a result of this incredible miracle, the whole village was turning to God. The villagers were awe-struck, some even fell to the ground in worship, and the Holy Spirit came upon them.

The same God — the same power that raised Jesus from the dead — can raise someone from the dead, even today.

Jesus himself foretold this,

"Do not marvel, ... for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who

committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28-29)

Every one of us will experience the resurrection.

Physical resurrection did not happen only to the Lord Jesus or to some other individuals mentioned in the Bible. One day, every single one of us will experience the resurrection. Take careful note of what Jesus said: There will be some who will be raised to “a resurrection of life”. And there will be some who will be raised to “a resurrection of judgment.” That means, death is not the end of the story. Death is not the termination of existence. Yes, we will die one day, but we will wake up, as it were, from sleep. Then, every one of us will have to give an account of what we have done while in the body.

Death is not the end. We will each have to give an account of what we have done.

This fact should have a profound effect on how you live your life. Think on this very carefully. How will this affect how you are living today? Every one of us is going to be raised bodily, or physically, in order to give an account of our life.

Let us now turn to 1 Corinthians 15:30-32.

“Why are we also in danger every hour? ³¹ I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. ³² If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.”

“Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” It seems to me that that is the philosophy of life of so many people. Well, if there was no resurrection from the dead, then all we would have is this life. That is

why so many people live like this. All they care about is their welfare in this life. There is nothing beyond this, so if that's the case, you may as well enjoy yourself to the fullest. Sin as much as you like. Give yourself whatever you desire.

Many Christians are stuck with a guilt complex. They know that, as Christians, they should not love the world. They know there is the resurrection. Yet at the same time, they want to enjoy what the world offers. I say to such Christians:

Make up your mind!

If there is a resurrection from the dead, then live your life in that reality.

If you refuse to believe in the resurrection, then go ahead and enjoy this world. Go all out, because you don't have enough time to enjoy the world, for 'tomorrow we die'. According to the United Nations, the average life expectancy is about 72 years. So, it's a countdown, you're running out of time.

Look at what the apostle Paul is saying here. He tells the brethren in Corinth, "Look, we are in danger every hour. Every day, I die. I live every day as a dead man." We know what kind of a life Paul lived — he willingly suffered for the sake of the Kingdom of God, and in the end, he died for the sake of the Gospel.

Why?

Because he believed in the resurrection! He believed he would attain the resurrection the Lord Jesus had promised, that those who did good deeds would hear God's voice from the tomb, and come forth to a resurrection of life. (John 5:29)

Look around at our own co-workers. Many of our co-workers received an education overseas in the 1970s, and many went on to become engineers, doctors, lawyers and so on. They could have gone on to have highly successful careers, and be quite far up in the world by now. Today many would be rich, yet they are, as you know, suffering financially. One co-worker told me his pension had run out. There are co-workers who have nothing in pensions, no medical insurance, no savings. They don't own any property. They have no future in the world. When you retire, you have your pension. You may want to ask them, "Why in the world did you put yourself into this situation?!"

It isn't just the financial aspect that they have lost out on. There are co-workers who find themselves in physical danger as well. I've served in China, in Indonesia, in India, and you find yourself in dangerous situations. Why would someone put themselves in such danger? Of course, it is not because we want to be in danger; it's just the reality that comes with choosing to live in the light of the resurrection.

We live in this way because of the promise of the resurrection, like Abraham, like Moses. They rejected the pleasures of sin offered by this world. They lived for the sake of the resurrection of the dead.

If I were to ask you, do you believe that one of these days you will be raised from the dead, what would your answer be?

By definition the resurrection is not something that we can experience now. So, how do you know? How do the co-workers know? Why is it that there are some people who can live in this way and there are others who live as if there is no tomorrow?

Is the resurrection true? The reality of the present

There is another approach to understanding this. You see, **the key to the past and the future is always the present.**

You can experience the same resurrection power that Jesus experienced! How?

Let us turn to Romans 6:4.

Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Yes! We, too, can experience the newness of life. Notice Paul equates the resurrection life with the newness of life. In other words, the spiritual life that we experience today is the resurrection life.

When you think of the spiritual life, what do you think of?

For many people, the spiritual life is just a question of, “Well, you know, I believe that Jesus died. I believe that he rose from the dead. And now as a Christian I don't do the things that I used to do before. I try to be good.” We try. We don't go to the extreme, just like the Chinese saying “zhong yong zhi dao” (中庸之道). The Golden Mean. Everything in moderation! In Buddhism, it is the middle path. Right? That is our concept of the spiritual life.

However, let me tell you that in Scripture, the spiritual life, the Christian life *is* the **resurrection** life. In other words, for the Christian, the same power, the same God who raised Jesus from the dead, is

the very same power we experience today, not physically, but spiritually!

Have you experienced being raised from the dead?

Are you living the resurrection life?

If you have experienced the power of God raising you from the dead, you will know what I mean.

If one day I died, then suddenly, right before your eyes, I came back to life, would you know for certain that I was alive again? Or, would you insist I was still dead?

Am I really alive? Well, initially, I thought it was just a dream, but that is exactly what happened to me: I actually experienced the power of God raising me from the dead.

The one thing that made it absolutely certain for me was that I now had the power to overcome sin.

It was something I never had before. I now had the power, residing in me, as it were, to love even the unlovely. It was incredible, this transformation that happened within me.

It is extraordinary, in that whatever you do, as Paul says, "It is I yet not I." (See 1 Corinthians 15:10, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 4:13 etc.) It's I, I am doing it, but yet the feeling is, it is not me, because there's an extraordinary power, which I know isn't me. That power is working *in* me, *through* me, through you. Now, that is the Christian life! Wherever you go, whatever you do, there is a supernatural power working within you, empowering you.

Now if you recall, what were the disciples like before the resurrection? What were they like after the resurrection?

What were the disciples like before the resurrection?

Before the resurrection, the disciples were indeed very committed, very sincere. We read the four gospels — Matthew Mark, Luke and John — and we see that they were loyal to the Lord Jesus; they really tried. But when the crunch came, they couldn't face it. They deserted him. Remember Peter crying bitterly? It's because he had really tried, but he failed miserably. (Matthew 26:56,75)

What were they like after the resurrection?

Let's turn to Acts 4:13.

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marvelling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

This is when Peter and John have been made to stand before the high priest, and so they are surrounded by these Pharisees and elders, to be interrogated. This happens after the resurrection, i.e., after Pentecost. What does it say here? The high priest and the Pharisees “observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men.” And then notice this: “They were marvelling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.” Think on it. Had they not been with Jesus for the last three years? How come nothing happened then? What is it that has made the difference now?

Do you see? The difference is this: Now they have encountered the resurrected Christ! Now they have encountered the power of the resurrection — that same power that raised Jesus from the dead had now come upon them on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples were now so totally different, it caused them to marvel. It was so evident!

When God's life, God's power is in you, people around you cannot help but notice there's something extraordinary about you. There's an unspoken power, the power of life. Whatever you touch, turns to life. You have the Jesus touch.

And that life cannot help but change the people around you. This is the vision that the Lord has set before us today. The Lord Jesus says in John 7, "Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." This is the picture of the resurrection life!

Out of the deep, out from underground, what was dead comes forth as a fountain of living water, so that the surrounding desert that is dead will begin to spring forth into life.

I envision a day where this will be a reality in every place, and that in this church, we will be a river of living water. What's the point of starting so many churches if we are not going to be rivers of living water?

Wherever you go, can people see life? There are many Christians who go on for many years, but they are barren, bone-dry, and fruitless.

So, the crucial question is: Do you have the resurrected life?

That is the question I leave with you. May this Easter be significant for us. If we can experience the spiritual resurrection today, then Easter will indeed be a reality for us.