It is Easter—RESURRECTION SUNDAY! We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, some 2,000 years ago. Jesus Christ and His resurrection is the cornerstone upon which Christianity rests. The resurrection separates Jesus from ALL the rest of the religious leaders and spiritual icons across the ages.

What is the difference between Jesus Christ and ALL the others? The difference is that ALL of the others are dead. Jesus lived, died, rose again and lives today. On top of the that. He did it ALL, JUST LIKE He said that He would. Three times, the gospels record, Jesus predicted that He would die and then rise from the dead. In the book of Acts we find the keynote of all of their proclamation was that Jesus was risen from the dead. Remove the cornerstone of the resurrection, and our temple of faith will come crashing down.

The Apostle Paul said that if Christ be not raised we are of all men most miserable. He said, “*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, “There is no resurrection of the dead”? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith. 15 Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ ​— ​whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. 19 If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone*” (1 Cor 15:12-19 , CSB).

Terri and I just finished watching the Taylor Sheridan Yellowstone series, “1923.” Any of ya’ll see it? OK—Good. After Spencer comes, and after all the fighting … The lady Marshall takes Teona, the young Crow Indian lady to stand trial.  Well, all the witnesses were now dead, so the case is dismissed.  The young Indian lady is free to go, but where will she go?

Deputy 2 Spears says to Teona : “You were right to fight back.”
Teona replies, “But it cost me everything.”

2 Spears then says, “It always does.”

Jesus Christ fought back.  He fought against sin and hell and grave.  It cost Him everything. He fought the good fight and it cost Him.

No. Wait.  It didn’t **cost** Him. He **GAVE**.  Jesus GAVE everything.  He freely offered Himself as a sacrifice.  He freely paid the price to ransom His people from their sins.  He died for our sins, it says in Romans 4.25. That is not all it says. But wait ... there's MORE ... It goes on to say that “*He was raised to life for our justification*.”

Justification?  What does that big ole Bible word mean?  We can break it down into "just-as-if-I'd never sinned."  It means being put right with God.   It means being saved.

Jesus died for our sins and His resurrection opened up *a NEW and LIVING way* (Heb 10.20). Jesus opened up THE way of salvation. Jesus said, “*I am the WAY, the truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but by Me*” (Jn 14.6). Jesus ***IS*** the way to the Father.

The Bible is a complete story.  It just doesn't run in a straight line, as we might like for it to.  Let's go back, back to the very beginning …

In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. He got everything just right and He created people. He placed them in a literal paradise, a place we call Eden. In the midst of this paradise the placed two unique trees. One was the tree of Life. The other was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were commissioned to tend and care for their paradise home. They were the Edenic EPA. They had just one rule. The Lord told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. He said that if they did, they would surely die.

Well, Adam and Eve messed up. They disobeyed. They ate from the tree of knowledge. They died spiritually. They were removed from the Garden. The Bible says, “*So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life*” (Gen 3:23-24).

Paul wrote, “*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned*” (Rom 5:12). With sin came death and spiritual death.

Some assume that the angel was just put there to keep man out of the Garden. We know that the Lord did not want people to live in a perpetual stage of sinfulness and separation. The text says the cherubim were placed there “*to guard the way to the tree of Life*” (Gn 3.24). The Lord posted a guard at the entrance to the Garden. Strong tells us that this word guard means “**properly**, to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; **generally**, to protect, attend to, etc.” That guard was posted **to PROTECT the way to the Tree of Life** and to protect man from himself.

Are you seeing where I am going? Jesus died to officially provide access to His people to the Tree of Life. Jesus gives eternal life. Just read thru the gospel of John. Our theme verse for this year is John 10.10. It says, “*A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.*” Jesus opened up that new and living way. He ***IS*** that way. He is THE **ONLY** WAY to have eternal life!

When we get to the end of the story in the book of Revelation. We find the tree of life once again. In Rev 22 we find that there is a river of water of life and the tree of life. It is a return to the beginning.

In case anybody is wondering, yes, I WILL get to our text - right now in fact. Look back starting with verse 7. Listen for what Paul says about knowing Jesus. The Bible says, “*But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in* ***view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord****. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ ​— ​the righteousness from God based on faith. 10* ***My goal is to know him*** *and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death*” (Phil 3:7-10).

Paul says that more than anything else in life he wants to know Jesus. Knowing isn’t just acquiring facts. Knowing is more than information. It extends to experience. It means having a relationship. In fact, in the Bible, the word for engaging in sex is “knowing.” It doesn’t get more personal or intimate or experiential than that.

Henry Blackaby used to say that the Lord pursues us for a love relationship that is real and personal. In the vine and branches passage we find that to know Jesus is to love Him (Jn 15). There is a progression in there. To ***know*** Jesus is to ***Love*** Him. To love Him is to ***obey*** Him. To obey Him is to ***abide*** in Him and to abide in Him is the key to ***bearing fruit***. And fruit-bearing ***brings glory to the Father***. This is BIG stuff!

One of the keys to Christian living is cultivating an intimate personal relationship with the Lord. It means knowing Him. Paul’s goal was to know Jesus and to know him more and more.

Here in Philippians chapter 3, Paul gives us three things that He wants to continually know. Look at verse 10. Paul says, “*My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death*.”

Paul wants to know Him—His **person**. Then, Paul wants to know the **power** of His resurrection, and, finally, Paul wants to know the fellowship of His sufferings (His **passion**). Since we are not providing lunch for you today, I am just going to hone in on one. Focus on that phrase, “*to know … the power of His resurrection*.”

**What about the power of His resurrection**?

The resurrection of Jesus is powerful enough o DIVIDE HISTORY .

 We have BC and AD—”Before Christ” and “Anno Domini” - Latin for “the year of our Lord.”

The power to transform a rag-tag bunch of nobodies into Apostolic missionaries.

The *power to move them from fearful hiding behind locked doors to boldly standing before officials and saying that they must obey God rather than men*.

The *power to turn the world upside-down*. In Acts the Bible, speaking of Paul’s missionary team says, “*After they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead: “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah.” 4 Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, including a large number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews became jealous, and they brought together some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. Attacking Jason’s house, they searched for them to bring them out to the public assembly. 6 When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, “****These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too***” (Acts 17:1-6). They turned it right-side-**UP** ! !

The power of His resurrection turned Peter from a fearful fisherman who denied even knowing Jesus to a dynamic preacher. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached and “*about three thousand people were added*” to the church (Ac 2.41)!

The power of His resurrection changed Saul, the brilliant young Jewish scholar, who was a leader in persecuting the infant church, into Paul the missionary Apostle who wrote about half of the New Testament.

Going back, it is the power of His resurrection that ***justifies*** us. Itis the power of His resurrection that ***frees*** us from our sins, cancelling that debt that we could never repay. This is the power that ***saves*** us

It is by the power of His resurrection that Jesus “*is able to save completely those who come to God through him*” (Heb 7:25).

It is the power of His resurrection that opens up that new and living way, the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. By the power of His resurrection, He is able to save **anyone**, from the utter-most to the gutter-most.

It is by the power of His resurrection that after over 2,000 years there is still a church composed of blood-bought, blood-washed believers in Jesus Christ that is telling that old old story of Jesus and His love.

Maybe you have heard of Albert Schweitzer. He is known for many things. He was a driving force in the original “Quest for the Historical Jesus.” He even wrote a book by that title, not a very hopeful book. Someone said, “Schweitzer’s Jesus was neither the incarnate Son of God nor a meek and mild moralist; he was a radical 1st-century Jew seized by an eschatological vision which he pursued single-mindedly and with an apocalyptic fervor. This Jesus’ intention was to force God’s hand by declaring the imminent arrival of God’s kingdom, and to bring history to its climax by sheer force of will. Others have advanced this same thesis, but I don’t think anyone has ever expressed it as well or as powerfully as Schweitzer: ‘Jesus lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring ordinary history to a close. The wheel refuses to turn, and Jesus throws himself on it. Then it does turn, and it ***crushes*** him. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man” ( https://thelittleredblog.typepad.com/blog/2024/03/saturday-crushed-by-the-wheel.html ).

For all his genius, Schweitzer **missed it** on this one. Jesus threw Himself on a cross. He ***GAVE*** everything. He hung there in ignominious nakedness, covered by the sins of all mankind. He accepted that burden and he bore it. He died there. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. On the third day, when the stone was rolled away from the door of that tomb, Jesus was **GONE**. A heavenly messenger made an announcement to the women who had come to His tomb. The Bible says, “*The angel told the women, “Don’t be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.’ Listen, I have told you.” 8 So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news*” (Matt 28:5-8).

“He is not here. He is risen.” He rose from the dead, leaving the sins of all mankind buried forever. He rose again, the “victor from the dark domain.” He arose victorious over sin, hell and death. He lives today by the power of His resurrection. His resurrection makes **ALL** the difference!

An old hymn says . . . “I serve a risen Savior   He’s in the world today.
I know that He is living,   Whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy;   I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him   He’s always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart. “

Can YOU sing that? Is it **real** for you? Do you ***know*** Jesus and the power of His resurrection?

Are you **saved**, **set-apart** and **serving** the King of kings and Lord of Lords?

Is it your goal to know Him more and more, so that every day with Jesus you love Him more and more?

Do you know HIM and the POWER of His resurrection???