

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Easter Sunday| For Sunday, April 21st, 2019

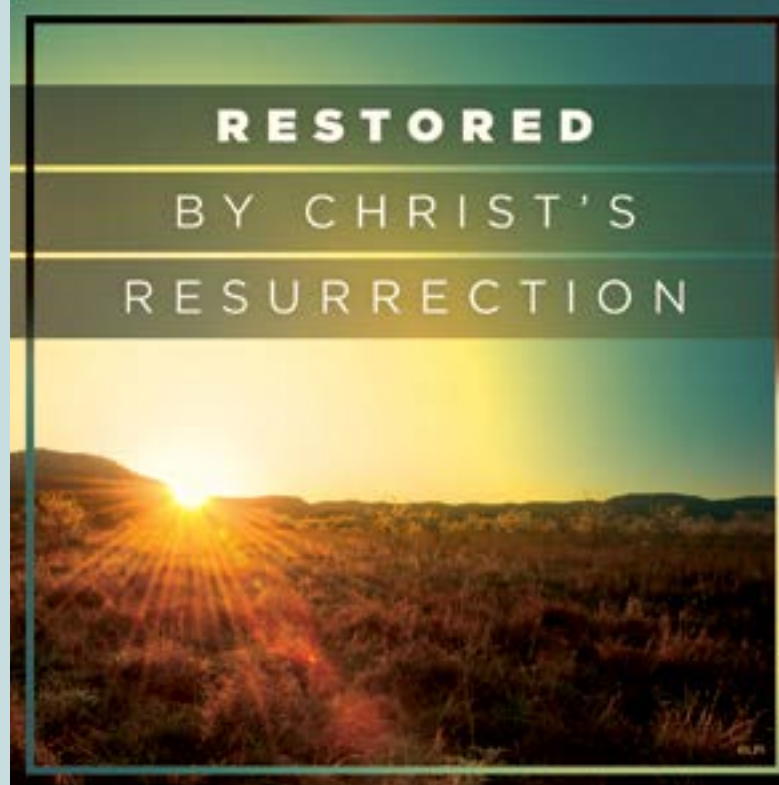
What Difference Does It Make?

Rev. Mark Suslenko

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

John 20:1-9



Alleluia! Christ is risen! These exclamations have meaning for us and express the hope to which we are called. They also make sense out of all that Jesus did and said during his earthly life. Whether Jesus knew the fullness of his risen identity in God as the Christ, he lived his life and embraced his suffering and death believing in Emmanuel, his Abba. Jesus' Father was the constant source of strength and purpose he needed in order to do what he did and say what he said. That ultimate trust became very evident as he faced his agony in the Garden and pleaded with his Abba to take this cup from him. While the resurrection is certainly the cause of our hope, it is our belief that God is with us in every moment of our existence that gives us purpose and endurance. It is for certain that we have been created and are loved by our Abba God who never will abandon us.

Who we really are remains to be seen, as St. Paul tells us, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God." Our hope of falling into our resurrected self and discovering our full identity remains both a mystery and most anticipated surprise! But, what God will one day give us cannot be the only reason for our faith. It is far too self-focused and concerned to look exclusively at the prize. Like Jesus, we have to find our strength and purpose in the relationship we have with God, a relationship determined from the beginning of time that is at the core of who we are. We cannot be who we really are without being in God.

As we conduct the daily business of our lives, do we ever consider the full consequences of our thoughts, words, and actions? It is all too easy today to get caught up in what appears to be the "present moment" and set our sights purely on what is required to get us through our immediate concern. As folks who are called to proclaim to all of the world not only the glory of the risen Christ, but the truth of our identity in God, greater thought and consideration is needed. St. Paul also clearly tells us "to think of what is above, not of what is on earth." For many of us, the "demands and obligations of the earth" can be overwhelming and all-consuming at times.

The only way we can get about the task of proclaiming our faith and showing others that our faith makes a difference in our lives is by developing a habit of prayer. This is what Jesus did. He often went off by himself to pray.

To be fruitful, this does not require a lot of time. Rather, it necessitates an "inner distancing" of ourselves from the stuff in our lives and the world so

that we can reconnect with our Source and be called back to the truth of who we are. It is only in this way that we can acquire the contemplative vision needed to see ourselves, others, the world, and God Himself as God sees. Then, although unaware of where our life journey will ultimately bring us, we participate, even though dimly, in revealing the hidden life we have with Christ in God.

Once we change our focus from what is below to what is above, even the smallest of our actions and the simplest of our thoughts take on greater depth, purpose, and meaning. It is no longer just about what I need at the moment but something more far reaching and greater. This is where the need for discipline comes into play. Without the discipline of prayer and commitment to the mission, discipleship is simply not possible.

Our world can easily convince us that our mission is something other than the Gospel. We can find ourselves, without difficulty, forgetting that there are consequences to our actions and thoughts that can affect not only others around us but generations to come. Minor omissions, errors in judgment, self-serving decisions, and sins may not appear to be all that significant, but in reality they are. We all live in and interact with a world that operates without an anchored value system. For the Christian, it is not enough to live by the motto “do no harm” or “just love one another,” wrongly thinking that these are sufficient so that we can “do what Jesus would do.” These are just road maps leading us to the “island of anything goes” and do little to help us reach the promise of our resurrected self in God.

The Gospel, driven and ratified by the resurrection of Christ, asks us to be countercultural. We cannot do things because they are socially acceptable, expected, or normative. The resurrection of Christ, if we allow its power to touch us, can restore our relationships with God, ourselves, one another, and the world we are asked to manage. It can keep us focused and free us from the distortions that can often disorientate our lives.

Whether we like the idea, our faith is not a private matter. While it is not necessary to proselytize our faith, we can certainly give witness to it by how we structure and order our lives. Where and how we invest our money, how we conduct the business of our work, and what priorities we emphasize in organizing our family life, determining the importance of the regular practice of our faith, and carving out space for a life of prayer are just some of the ways we can be successful and credible contemporary disciples.

Christ is risen! What does that really mean to you?

Rev. Mark Suslenko

To learn more about LPi's services
and publications designed to help
you build a vibrant
parish, please visit our website:

www.4LPi.com
LPi
2875 S. James Drive
New Berlin, WI 53151
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

Send email address changes to:
lpiconnections@4LPi.com

To opt out of receiving this
reflection, contact:
lpiconnections@4LPi.com

©2019 LPi
All rights reserved.

PRAYER

O Risen Lord, the Way, the Truth, and the Life!
Make us faithful followers of the spirit of Your Resurrection.
Grant that we may be inwardly renewed;
dying to ourselves in order that You may live in us.
May our lives serve as signs of the transforming power of Your
love.
Use us as Your instruments for the renewal of society,
bringing Your life and love to all people,
and leading them to Your Church.
This we ask of You, Lord Jesus,
living and reigning with the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever.
Amen.

*— Resurrection Prayer from the Congregation of the Resurrection
of our Lord Jesus Christ*