

Jesus Christ is risen!!!!... He is Risen indeed!!!!

On this resurrection Sunday, I'm going to begin by posing a question that I want each of us to be asking ourselves:

How's my walk with God going???

And specifically:

Is the resurrection life I have in Christ:

- Theoretical; is it
- Notional; or is it
- a Reality?

Is the resurrection life I have in Christ:

- Theoretical;

Is it something the Scriptures say, and so I **know** about it, without actually experiencing a true resurrection life in practice?

- Or is it Notional;

When I think about the resurrection of Jesus, and the way we come into relationship with Jesus, is it for me, 'a nice notion' that I like to feel good about... "Cool, I'm going to be raised too..."..

- Or is the resurrection life I have in Christ, a current Reality?

Is the resurrection life that's described here, truly a good representation of the amazing transforming experience I am having, in knowing Jesus and walking with Him?

Now, as I read today's Bible reading, I was reminded again, of why the Gospel is so offensive to so many people... It is so Black&White – there are no shades of grey... And in a world that seems to name “Tolerance” as its key virtue, the Gospel is truly offensive... BTW, nowhere in the Scriptures (Old Testament or New) – nowhere is tolerance presented as a virtue that we should exhibit...

And when it comes to:

- right and wrong, there are no shades of grey;
- saved and unsaved, there are no shades of grey;
- being a child of God or enemy of God, there are no shades of grey;
- our eternal destination – (eternal glory with Christ, or the righteous judgment of God), there are no shades of grey...
- one's choice of religion, there are no shades of grey – Jesus is the only way...

And there's certainly not a hint of grey to be found in these 10 verses. There is what we once **were**, and what we now **are**, because we've been made alive together with Christ.

And so, if there's no shades of grey, “theoretical” doesn't cut it; “notional” doesn't cut it... Having a **genuine** resurrection life of being raised with Jesus, and all that entails: there are no shades of grey... So, how is your walk with God going???

I suspect one of the reasons why the Gospel can come across as being really offensive to some folk, is our fault. It's when as disciples of Jesus, we forget what we once were... If Paul had written here, "There's all these evil people in the world, but you people in the church, you're wonderful..." That would come across as being "condescending" and "elitist"... And yet, that's exactly how some Christians act...

I remember this bloke that used to be in a church I was a member of, and this dear old man used to like to tell Children's stories... And he would wrap-up every children's story with these words, "So, you children need to remember what you've just learned, as you go out into the wicked world." ...

It's like, we're the chosen holy huddle, and the rest of them, they're wicked...

But Disciples of Jesus are being reminded here (over and over again), that we are no better than anyone else... It's by **grace** that we are saved, so that no one can boast...

And 5 times in these 10 verses, The Apostle Paul uses the words "were" and "once"... And each time he uses them, there's a multitude of symptoms that he puts with them...

you were dead in the trespasses and sins
² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

And we used to do that. That was once us...

Before (in God's mercy) we were saved and entered the resurrection life with Jesus, things were stacked against us. We once used to be controlled and directed by other forces:

- internal;
- external; and
- supernatural.

at play.

- We were controlled by what Paul calls "the flesh" (the internal sinful nature) – our sinful rebellion against God, wanting to put ourselves before Him.
- And we were controlled by external forces "the world":
following the course of this world
We used to think as people of the world think. Our aims and goals were no different from anybody else...
- And we were controlled by spiritual forces "the devil":
following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Now, that doesn't mean we were necessarily possessed by the devil, but forces of evil had an effect on what we thought and what we did...

And so at one time, we were sons of disobedience (our lives were characterised by disobedience). we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,
That's what we did...
and [we] were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

That means, we were doomed to the righteous judgment of God, where He would pour his wrath out on us... That was once **our** fate – the fate of all unbelievers...

There are no shades of grey...

Before we were saved (before we entered the resurrection life of Jesus), I was no different to anyone who is a child of wrath today... So, I've got nothing to boast about, and neither do you.

BUT!!!

And I praise God for the word "But"... It's the word "but" that gives us hope here... And not only us – it's a word that gives hope to all who would surrender their whole self to Jesus and enter His resurrection life.

BUT GOD!!!

It's not "but Michael"; It's not "but you"...

It's "BUT God!!!":

- being rich in mercy
- because of [His] great love
- immeasurable riches of his grace
- in kindness

You know, some people's picture of God, is God delights in smiting...

When my Grandpa got old, he had a sawn-off .22, loaded with ratshot, and he'd walk around his house, opening cupboards, searching for geckos. And there were little pin-holes in the walls and cupboards...

And that's some people's picture of God, on the search for someone who does something evil, so He can immediately smite them... That couldn't be further from the truth.

In reality, The Lord loves the sinner, even while we were dead in our trespasses... And let's be straight here – this is another black&white thing: We're either spiritually dead, or we're spiritually alive. And God loves (with a great love), even those who are spiritually dead...

How much does God love us?

Even while we were still sinners; Even while we were spiritually dead; Even when we were sons of disobedience; and by nature, children of wrath:

He loved us this much, with Jesus' arms stretched out and nailed to the cross..

Yes, things were stacked against us... And things are stacked against the sons of disobedience today:

We once used to be controlled and directed by other forces:

- internal forces – the flesh (sinful nature);
- external forces – the world (and all the cravings that the world would offer); and
- supernatural forces – the spirit of evil (doing his darndest to keep us as his children of disobedience)..

Things were stacked against us

BUT GOD!!!

- being rich in mercy
- because of [His] great love
- immeasurable riches of his grace
- in kindness

Even while we were totally opposed to God, made us alive together with Christ.

Now, you might be sitting here, thinking, “*Now, hang on a minute Michael: you’re being **extremely** black&white – you’re painting this picture as if **everyone** who isn’t a Christian, is totally corrupt and evil... But I can’t agree with that, because not everyone is as evil as what you are painting...*” Now, if you’re thinking that, I have done very well – I have explained very well, what this Scripture is saying...

It is extremely black and white,, and this is why.... Do you know what the worst sin is? It's the pride that keeps us from surrendering our lives from Jesus...

Now, if you understand "cards", you'll get this.

One day, there was a group of us playing 500. BTW, Robyn hates it when someone plays misère, especially if it's me who does it and I'm her partner.

But for me, if I can turn a losing hand into a winning hand, I'm very happy with that. Now, for those who don't know the game of 500, if you've got a really bad hand, and you think you could probably lose every trick (every time you play a card), you call "misère".

Anyway, one day, I had a dreadful hand, and not all dreadful hands are good misère hands, but this one was. And so I bid misère, and no one else thought they could better it, so I won the bid. When I took up the kitty, those cards helped me a bit, and things just looked better and better... And I was supremely confident. As I looked at my hand, my role was to lose every trick, and I came to the conclusion that no one could beat me...

And I joked and jibed, "There's no way you can possibly beat me." and as we got towards the end of the hand, I looked at the cards I had left, and I looked at the cards that everyone else had left... And I only had 3 cards, but they had four, and I thought "What's going on here?". And I realise that 2 of my cards were stuck together, and I did have 4 cards... Does

anyone want to guess what the 4th card was, that was hidden, that I hadn't seen???

The Joker... No card beats the joker. I couldn't possibly lose the trick... If I had the joker, I couldn't possibly win misère.

Now, we talked last week, about the difference between having a “clear conscience” and a “good conscience”... A “**good** conscience” is a conscience which is calibrated to the **true** standard of “good”, which is God’s standard... And keeping God’s standard, isn’t “multiple choice”, and it doesn’t come with a 50% pass-mark... So, if I keep 5/10 commandments, I’m good-to-go...

When Jesus was asked, “Which is the greatest commandment”, He said:

Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)

³⁷ , “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

You see, no matter how good (by my own conscience) I believe I am, if I have a pride that causes me to reject Jesus – if I do **not** love the Lord with all my heart and soul and mind,, that’s like playing misère with a hidden joker in my hand – I cannot win... If I don’t love God with all of my heart, soul and mind, it’s black and white: I am a **son of disobedience**.

BUT GOD!!!

- being rich in mercy
- because of [His] great love
- immeasurable riches of his grace
- in kindness

Even while we were totally opposed to God, **made us alive together with Christ.**

“by grace you have been saved” We get a taste of being saved now – the resurrection life of Christ, we enter into now... The fullness is yet to come, but it begins now.

He has raised us up **now**, and situated us with Christ **now**. Even though we still have our physical bodies, our future with Christ is so assured, Paul speaks of it as if it has already come: **He has raised us up with him**

Now, is that a reality for you? Or is it only theoretical or notional???

He has **seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus**

Is that a reality for you? Or is it only theoretical or notional???

You see, when we were “dead in trespasses and sin”, that’s what we walked in. Now that we’ve been raised with Christ, everything changes. We are no longer what we once were.

- We no longer walk in trespasses and sin we now walk in good works.
- We are no longer sons of disobedience We’re now God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.
- We’re no longer children of wrath: We’ve been saved by Grace...

Chalk & Cheese... Black & White...

And the more we realise what God has saved us from – when we realise the perilous condition we once were in, this magnifies God’s wonderful mercy that He’s shown to us...

Jesus once said, “**He who is forgiven little, loves littleⁱ**” But as we remember how much we’ve been forgiven, and as we remember the resurrection of Christ and what it means for us to be raised with Him, we’ve got a very good reason to love a lot...

So,
Is the resurrection life I have in Christ:

- Theoretical;
Is it something the Scriptures say, and so I **know** about it, without actually experiencing what a true resurrection life is?

- a life filled with love;
 - filled with righteousness;
 - worshipping our Lord
-
- Or is it Notional;
When I think about the resurrection of Jesus, and the way we come into relationship with Jesus, is it for me, 'a nice notion', and so:
 - I might praise God on occasion, but
 - it really doesn't affect my life much

 - Or is it a Reality?
Is the resurrection life that's described here, truly a good representation of the amazing transforming experience I am having, in knowing Jesus and walking with Him?

Let's pray:

Lord, on this resurrection Sunday,
We praise you, for your amazing power,
that has raised Christ from the Dead.

And Lord, we praise You for Your

- rich mercy
- great love
- immeasurable riches of [Your] grace
- kindness

That You have made us alive together with Christ
Jesus...

Lord, we thank You
And we praise You.

Lord, for some of us,
it's been theoretical;
it's been notional;

But Lord,
from today on,
may we truly reflect
the resurrected life in Christ that You've given us.
to Your Glory

Amen.

¹ Luke 7:47