

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church
Easter 2
April 7, 2024
Sermon by Daniel D. Pautz
The real facts of real life.

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have touched regarding the Word of Life—²the life appeared, and we have seen it. We testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We are proclaiming what we have seen and heard also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We write these things to you so that our joy may be complete. —1 John 1:1-4 (EHV)

The two of them hurried as fast as they could. They had run, then they did a fast walk, and then they ran again. It was a seven mile trip by foot. A bit earlier that day they had walked the seven miles to their home and they were not in a hurry. But now it was different. They were in a big hurry on the return trip. It likely took less than two hours to make the seven mile trip. But why the big hurry? Had they left their cell phones behind? No, this was way, way before the time of cell phones. They were huffing and puffing! They were out of breath. What could be so important? And when they got to the place, the doors were locked. However, there were people inside. After pounding on the door and identifying themselves, the doors were finally opened. And the first words they excitedly shouted were “It is true. It is true. The Lord has risen.”

Likely you know the full story of the two followers of Jesus on that first Easter afternoon going from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. They had heard some news that some of their women folk had seen Jesus and that He had risen. But they remained confused. Then along the way Jesus walked with them but He did not allow them to recognize Him. Jesus showed from Scripture that the Christ would suffer, die, and rise from the dead. Then as they were eating, Jesus allowed them to recognize him and then disappeared. They were excited. That’s why they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples the good news.

It was a real fact, Jesus had risen. But yet the disciples did not know what to believe. My mother told us children, “Don’t believe everything you hear.” She was referring to the rumors and wild stories about people that we would hear at grade school. That was good advice. The disciples were not believing what they were hearing that Jesus had risen. But they should have! Jesus himself had told them he would rise on the third day. Then, suddenly, even though the doors were again locked, the Risen Savior appeared in their midst. They just could not believe it. They thought that they were imagining something. Therefore, Jesus told them, “Touch me. See for yourself,” To prove that it was he, he asked for food. And when he put that food in His mouth and ate, they knew that he had Risen! It was a real fact of real life.

Note that the disciples had not quickly believed that Jesus had risen. You also know about doubting Thomas. All had been slow to believe. But there is a silver lining in their dark cloud of having doubted. That these skeptical disciples became fully convinced that Jesus had arisen shows all the more the truth that He had risen indeed! And the Apostles would devote the rest of their lives spreading the news to the world about them of Christ’s atoning sufferings, death, and resurrection.

In the very first sentence of the Apostle John’s letter you can almost feel his awe and excitement that Jesus had risen and was alive. He wrote, “We have heard him, we have touched him, we have observed him.” And then three times in these verses are the words “We have seen him.” John had been with Jesus for over three years. He heard Jesus preach, he saw miracles such as the feeding of the five thousand and raising people from the dead. After his resurrection Jesus had walked with the disciples, talked with them, ate with them. There was a time when Jesus appeared to over 500 people. The resurrection is a fact, a real fact of real life.

You know that the resurrection means many, many wonderful things for you. It shows that our sins are forgiven. It shows that Jesus keeps his Word. Two things are especially mentioned by John in these verses. For one thing, through faith in Jesus you have fellowship with God. Isn’t that amazing that through faith you have fellowship with the Almighty God. Many of you will be watching the solar eclipse on Monday that begins shortly after 10 am. Here in Arizona about two thirds of the sun will be obscured by the moon. Remember that you have fellowship with the maker of the sun and the moon and everything. You a sinner have fellowship with our Lord because he has removed our sins. And that is more amazing than an eclipse.

And even more! Through Jesus we have this fellowship, this connection, with our fellow believers. There is a large Fellowship Hall in our new Ministry-Education Building. Although our Fellowship Hall in some ways will be similar to a Fellowship Hall or Community Center in a Mobile Home Park or a retirement community, it goes beyond that. In it is a fellowship with our believers that is based upon our fellowship with Jesus. You might not know the names or situations of all who worship here or meet in our Fellowship Hall, but you have a special fellowship with them.

The real fact of Christ's resurrection means we too shall have life, eternal life. There indeed will be a resurrection for all. The Gospel of John records many statements of Jesus about eternal life.

- "Do not be amazed at this," Jesus says, "for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out. (John 5:28)
- "Because I live, you also will live." (John 14:19)
- "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die?" (John 11:25-26)

There always have been many false teachings in regard to life after death. There is the teaching promoted by Satan and his nasty demons that there is no hell. Whenever you hear someone saying that, confront them with the words "Says who?" Tell them that that is not what God says in the Bible. Listen how this false teaching leads to other false teachings! If there is no hell, from what do we need saving? And if we do not need to be saved from anything, why do we need a Savior? And if we do not need a Savior, why do we need Jesus? And if we do not need to be saved from anything, why in the world did Jesus suffer and die? The teaching that there is no hell rejects what the Bible says – and it rejects what Jesus accomplished with His sufferings, death, and resurrection. The fact is that there are real people who end up in a real hell.

Another false teaching common today is the statement "We all go to a better place." Sometimes that statement is made with such a ring of authority that you would think it was found many places in the Bible. But not all go to a better place. After Jesus spoke the words of John 3:16 he said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:17-18) If we all go to a better place, for what reason did Jesus suffer and die? And why did he command Christians "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Doesn't it amaze you that you will live forever? There is something beyond your allotted time on earth. This first epistle of John begins with the thought of eternal life, it speaks throughout about it, and then ends with the thought of eternal life. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12)

Many familiar things that we know from memory speak about eternal life.

- "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." John 3:16
- The Apostles Creed – I believe in "The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting."
- The Lord's Prayer ends with the words "Forever and ever"
- "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

What will eternal life be like? The details of it are beyond our comprehension. It would be like trying to describe to a person blind from birth the beauties of a sunset – or to a person who has never heard a sound the joyful sounds of an Easter hymn or the happy laughter of a child. Paul wrote, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) Someone once spoke of heaven this way: "Think of your happiest day on earth – and multiply that by 1000 times."

Keep in mind that you will be with the Lord. You love being with those who love you, don't you? Well, there is nobody who loves you as much as your Lord. In heaven you will be with Him forever. Think of other wonders and joys of heaven.

Your body will be raised to life and glorified. No aches or aging or covid or cancers or migraines!

- The Apostle John wrote in the Book of Revelation, "God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."
- We will be with perfect people. That means there will be no bullying, insults, no need for locks, no scams, no annoyances.
- Better yet, we will be perfect. There will be no sinful nature to battle, no self-pity, no worrying!
- Psalm 16:11 says that God will fill you with joy in His presence, with eternal pleasures at His right hand.
- A pastor described the activities of heaven with the words, "We will not wish we were doing something else."

No wonder Paul wrote, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21)

He lives and grants me daily breath;
he lives, and I shall conquer death;
he lives my mansion to prepare;
he lives to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"