Why Does the Resurrection Matter?
The resurrection of Jesus has always stood at the center of Christian faith and proclamation. But why is it so important, and what does it mean for us?

The Center of the Message

When the early Christians first spread the gospel—literally the “good news”—all over the known world, there was one fact that stood as the foundation of their message: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

—1 Corinthians 15:3-4

The resurrection of Jesus remains the core reality and central tenet of the Christian faith. It is the ultimate expression of God’s love that has transformed everything. As St. Paul put it, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Love wins—often in surprising ways.

God spoke through the prophets of old that one day, God’s victory over darkness and oppression would come. Just as God rescued the Israelites from the slavery of the Egyptians by parting the Red Sea, so God would rescue all people from oppression through the coming of the Messiah.

Now, the Jewish understanding of this promised Messiah had long been that of a warrior king who, like David, would achieve peace with the sword. While many started to believe that Jesus was the Messiah during his lifetime, those hopes were dashed when he was killed. A crucified Messiah is no Messiah at all. Or so it seemed.

Jesus’ resurrection shows us a new kind of victory and strength—one that runs deeper than physical strength and worldly power. In a word, it shows us the unshakable victory of love. For “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and Jesus is God. When Jesus rose from the dead, the undeniable message went forth: love is stronger than death, sin, and evil. As the disciples proclaimed the gospel, they did not lead with Jesus’ teaching. They could have taught from his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) or from his discourse at the Last Supper (John 14–16). Instead, they proclaimed his death and resurrection. Calling upon the power of the resurrection, Peter told the immobilized beggar, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk” (Acts 3:6), and instantly the beggar jumped up and began “walking and jumping and praising God” (3:8).

The next day, with the healed beggar alongside him, Peter made this statement before the high priests and elders: “It was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed” (Acts 4:10).

Jesus really is the way, the truth, and the life.

The resurrection validates everything Jesus said about himself. Jesus not only taught people and healed them, but he claimed to be the Messiah—the divine Savior for humanity’s failings, who alone accomplishes the forgiveness of sin and reveals the Father to the world.

When he would announce to someone, “Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5), religious leaders understandably objected, “Who but God alone can forgive sins?” (2:7). When questioned about his authority and identity, Jesus used the one name reserved only for God himself: “Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM” (John 8:58).

If Jesus’ wonderful, inspiring, and powerful life simply ended with his crucifixion—the Romans’ brutal public punishment for major criminals—then the hope that people placed in Jesus as the divine Savior, Messiah, and Son of God would have been dashed.

But he has been raised! As Christians, we don’t proclaim that “Jesus was risen.” We declare that “Jesus is risen.” He truly is our one and only God who visited the earth, died under the weight of the world’s sins, and overcame the power of sin, death, and evil by rising victoriously. He is, as he told us, “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6) who “came so that [we] might have life and have it more abundantly” (10:10).

We can put all our trust and hope in Jesus, who leads us into the abundant life of God’s kingdom.
There’s more to life.

When Jesus rose, he was not merely resuscitated. He rose to a glorified body in which he “dies no more; death no longer has power over him” (Romans 6:9). This is good news for us all. When Jesus talked about his impending death, he made a promise: “I go and prepare a place for you, . . . so that where I am you also may be” (John 14:3). We too are promised resurrection in a glorified body—in, with, and through Christ Jesus!

Our hope, then, is not merely found in life in the here and now, with all the good as well as the trials we experience. What Jesus has done affects our lives now and forever.

Eternal life begins here and now.

God’s great promise of new life that endures forever is not something we enter into only after death. The kingdom of God is not only far away and later. Jesus came to announce that “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). “At hand” means in the here and now. For our time on earth, Jesus made a promise that was fulfilled after his resurrection: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. . . . The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.” (John 14:18, 26)

At Baptism, we receive a share in Christ’s resurrected life as the Holy Spirit comes to us and makes us sons and daughters of God. As St. Paul says, “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17, RSVCE). This is good news!

Bit by bit, as we say yes to Jesus in our hearts and receive him in the sacraments, we become more like him. For we “are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18, RSVCE).

The experience of eternal life and our vibrant sharing in Christ’s resurrection are only a word away. Jesus comes to us with his desire to fill us with his new life. Our task is to simply ask him for it and to receive it.

For eternal life begins now.

This world is not all there is.

Love will always win in the end, often in surprising ways.

Through Jesus, who remains forever the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus, I choose you as my way, my truth, and my life. Help me to know you more and to experience the power of your resurrection, Holy Spirit, come and fill me with faith, hope, and love. Let me be a light to those who also need the heavenly help you offer. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Take the next step.

ChristLife presents Why Is the Resurrection Important?, a free video on the basis of our new life and hope for life everlasting, available at christlife.org/yes.

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