

**Title:** Jesus is risen. Alleluia?

**Text:** Romans 6:8-12, Ephesians 1:20-21

**Goal:** That hearers would live under the gracious authority of the risen Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our *risen* Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Funny thing about that word: *risen*. We all say it, and just sorta take it in stride. Treat it like there's nothing exceptional or odd going on. But maybe that's just because of the early hour. We haven't let it sink in yet. I imagine that once everyone wakes up, you'll all have smiles shining on your faces whenever someone mentions that "Jesus is risen" (*He is risen indeed*). See, with even this short exchange - repeated year after year - I can see that smile already creeping onto your faces.

Well stop it! I don't think you've let the full gravity of the situation sink in yet! This Jesus, who really was dead for a few days, came back to life! And it's not like he lived a while and then died again like Lazarus or something. He rose and he's still alive today! And that's got ... implications. Implications you might not be too fond of. You think this is *good* news? Perhaps you should think again. There are quite a few reasons that this Jesus fellow rising from the dead is *bad* news for you and me.

I mean, even *before* he was raised, this Jesus guy was powerful. It was a *miracle*, really, that the soldiers and the people there in Jerusalem were even able to capture and crucify him. Here was a guy who walked on water, who had power over disease, who could command the wind and the waves with a word. Let's pause here a second and think that one through. HE COULD COMMAND THE WIND AND THE WAVES!! When he spoke to the creation, the creation listened. I don't know if you've tried telling a 70 mph straight-line wind to "Knock it off," or tried commanding a line of severe thunderstorms to "Get on outta here," lately, but I'll guarantee they didn't listen to you. What are *you* to the forces behind a strong wind or a huge storm system. But such things as these listened to the voice coming out of this Jesus guy. He was powerful. He had *authority*. What he said, went, no matter if you were the mightiest forces of nature or an unclean spirit or a dead person in a casket; you listened to Jesus. You simply couldn't *not* listen to him. What he said, went.

And while we're on the subject, let's talk about some of the things he said. Yes, we generally remember fondly some of the sayings of Jesus we consider to be "sweet" and "nice". It was Jesus who said things like, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and, "Don't worry, because your Heavenly Father will take care of you." But even these sayings are not as fuzzy and easy as we tend to think. Loving our neighbors as we love ourselves is no simple task; it means not just feeling some squishy, gooey feeling toward the people around us, but feeding and clothing and housing those around us just as we feed, clothe, and house ourselves. To say we fail at this is quite the understatement. And when Jesus says, "Don't worry," he's not trying to ease your stressful life. He's commanding you: "Don't worry! Worry is trusting in someone other than

God, so don't do it! To worry is a sin." What we normally would take as a comfort comes to us as an indictment; we constantly fail to trust in God rather than in ourselves or in banks or insurance or stock prices or job security or savings accounts or the government. But Jesus said, "Don't worry," and what he says, goes.

And still this is not the only thing that Jesus said. He actually said a lot of things. Things like, "I have not come to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to fulfill them," and, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," and, "Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment," and, "Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." These are things we don't even *want* to hear! We don't *want* Jesus to tell us to fulfill the Ten Commandments. We want him to set us free from them! We don't *want* to love our enemies. We want to see them pay for what they've done to us! We don't want forgiveness for Osama bin Laden or Qaddafi or Hitler or that guy who cut us off on the interstate or the jerk who made fun of us in junior high or those punks who teased and bullied your kids. Instead, we need to kill them, hurt them, punish them, yell at them - ANYTHING but love them. And never mind external actions. We don't want to hear that our inmost thoughts - thoughts of anger or lust that often we can't even control, that arise of their own accord unbidden - subject us to the wrath of God, even though they do. Yes, what Jesus says, goes, even when he's talking about you.

While Jesus was alive, people couldn't ignore his authority. Wherever Jesus travelled, what he said, went. And just like us, the people within earshot of him couldn't bear to hear what he said. It was too much. They couldn't accept his having a say - the only say - in their lives. So they did the only thing they could - the same thing *we* would do if given the chance. They killed him.

Nowadays, we *don't* have the chance. Jesus isn't walking around saying things today. So we take a different way. We can't live with these words from Jesus, but we *can* ignore them for a time. We can't get our hands on Jesus to crucify him, but we *can* live like he's dead. Dead is the *only* way we can handle Jesus. The only way we can try to get out from under the things he says - out from under his authority - is if he's no longer among the living. He can command nature with a word, but "dead men tell no tales." A dead Jesus can't say anything about us when we live focused on ourselves. A dead Jesus can't care if we ignore our neighbors in need. A dead Jesus can't weigh in when we do what we want and get back at those who hurt us and entertain any thought that enters our brains. And so we just go and live as we please; we live like Jesus has been put to death and stayed there.

But I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you. Jesus is risen. (*Wait for response*) Not so quick with the, "He is risen, indeed," this time, are you? But I can't lie to you: Jesus is risen. He's alive, and that means what he says still goes. If anything, his authority is even greater now that he has been raised. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:

*"...according to the working of his (that is, the Father's) great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far*

*above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."*

Jesus commanded the wind and the waves *before* he was crucified, but now? Now that he has been raised from the dead, he is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Death did not lessen Jesus' authority. Rather, it gave him an opportunity in the resurrection to prove it. Jesus is alive, and what he says, goes! You can't *not* listen to him. You can't ignore him. You can't get around listening to what he says, because Jesus speaks with authority - the authority of one who is the Son of God - the authority of one who is risen - the authority of one to whom even *death* must listen.

And so all the things which Jesus said, still go. But the sayings we've looked at aren't the only things Jesus - this one who has authority - said. For instance, in Matthew chapter 4, Jesus said: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Because Jesus is alive, these words of his still have sway over us just as much as those earlier words that condemn us. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Our time has not yet run out. Yes, Jesus is alive, and he knows how we have lived, ignoring him and acting as if he were dead. Yet, because he's alive, he still - even now - issues the invitation to repent. He still sends out that call to us to turn away from all the things we do wrong, to give up all the times we refuse to listen to what he says, all the times we despise him and pretend he's dead. Jesus calls us to turn back to living as *he* directs us to live. Christ calls you and I to repentance *because* he is alive and is able to hear us when we repent; a dead man hears nothing.

But Jesus is alive, and so he's able to hear - and to forgive. It is this living Jesus who is the same one who said to others - the paralytic lowered through the roof, the woman who wept over his feet - "Your sins are forgiven." This living Jesus is the same one who breathed on his disciples and gave them *his* authority to forgive sins on his behalf. This living Jesus is the same one who spoke just a little while ago through the mouth of my dad - your called and ordained pastor - to tell you once again that, "your sins are forgiven." If Jesus were still dead, these words would be meaningless. But because Jesus is alive, because he has authority, we have the assurance that he hears our repentant cries and speaks to us those words of forgiveness. The same Jesus who speaks the commands we cannot bear to hear - the words that condemn us - this same Jesus also speaks the only words by which we live: "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus is alive, he has authority, and what he says goes.

Yet the living Jesus doesn't stop talking and saying things! Because he was raised from the dead and is even now still alive, he was able to speak to you at your Baptism. He was able in those waters to put his name on you, to make his claim on your life, to say to you, "You are *mine* and nobody else's." Jesus is *alive*, he has authority, and what he says goes. When he says, "you are mine," you are truly his.

And the living Jesus' living words don't stop there; they just keep coming at us. Because Jesus is alive, when he says things like, "This is my body. This is my blood, shed for you for the

forgiveness of sins,” that’s the way it is. He can command wind and waves and storms and sea. How much more can he command bread and wine? How much more does he make himself truly and bodily present to us in the meal we look forward to celebrating again today? He promised to be here, and because he lives he keeps his promises. Jesus is *alive*, he has authority, and what he says goes.

What else does the living Jesus say to us? (We couldn’t bear his words before, but now we can’t get enough of them!) Jesus the risen one is the same one who says to his disciples in John 14, “Because I live, you also will live.” This is what Paul is on about in Romans 6:

*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.*

The living Christ spoke to us in our Baptism and said we are his. He audibly forgives us our sins and verbally promises to be present at his Supper. Because what the living Lord says is what goes, he tells us that we have been united to him - we share his fate. Because he lives, we too will live. Just as he was raised up to new life, we can look forward to the day when he will speak to us and command Death to leave us alone; *and Death will have to listen. That's* the kind of authority our Jesus has. And so at his command our bodies will be reassembled and put right - we will be physically and truly resurrected. That is the hope we look forward to. That is the hope of which we are sure. Because Jesus is alive, he has authority - even over Death - and what he says goes.

Today is the day we celebrate the fact that our Lord DID rise from the dead. He’s alive. And because he is alive, we cannot help but listen to what he says. Whether he tells us to love our enemies or that our sins are forgiven, it is the same living Christ who speaks such words to us. And because Jesus is alive - because what he says goes - we simply have no choice but to live like HE IS RISEN. (*Wait for the response.*)

So live like Jesus is risen. Don’t live in a way that denies reality; don’t live like Jesus is still in the tomb, because he’s not. You can't ignore Christ's authority, so don't. Show love and kindness to those God has placed in your life, be they friend or foe. Don’t worry about tomorrow, but put your trust in God who cares for flower and fowl alike. When you fail, repent and receive the forgiveness spoken to you from Christ’s own mouth. Remember his claim on you in baptism and meet him at his Table. Take hope in the fact that when your risen Lord speaks on that great, Last Day, even Death will have to listen, and then you too will live as he does. Your faith is not in vain. Jesus is alive, he has authority, and what he says goes.

Amen.