

Sunday, April 21, 2019 – Easter Sunday
“Indestructible”

Luke 24: 1-12

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Classification Structure

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

Alleluia, Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, alleluia).

Yes praise be to God, Christ is risen. He was, as those described by Luke as two men with clothes gleaming white like lightning said to the women preparing Jesus' body for final burial, “delivered into the hands of sinful men to be crucified and on the third day raised again.” This was exactly as Jesus had said, and they remembered His words.

This week the world experienced what it is to suffer an irreplaceable loss. The beautiful, iconic Cathedral of Notre Dame, built in Paris France in the 1100s and 1200s brought much of the world together in horror at the destruction of something beautiful. This isn't just any place for worship, it's one of the most famous cathedrals in the world. Renowned for its history, its architecture, its art collection. The scope of the loss is still being inventoried but suffice it to say, as an unofficial national symbol for France it is a catastrophe such as would be the destruction of Independence Hall or the Golden Gate Bridge for us, and for those French Christians of a big part of their worship life.

And God's people over the years suffered irreplaceable loss. I think of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, overrun after a long Babylonian siege. The Ark of the Covenant, God's throne room on earth in the Most Holy Place of the temple, disappearing into a great historical mystery. The loss was monumental – no more was there a Most Holy Place to worship God, to offer sacrifices for the sin of the people. It was rebuilt, not matching its former glory, and then updated around the time of Jesus... but then again, we know that it would be destroyed a few decades later, a second time, never to rise again.

And we all know these losses too, don't we, in our own way? When things change in such a way as we can't imagine ever getting back what we had. When an injury or progression

of disease robs a person of their mobility, or their sight or their speech. When death separates us from those we love. When a relationship with loved ones splinters beyond any reasonable hope of restoration to the way it was. When job loss or income loss or some other financial calamity hits. And for many Christians around the world, when church steeples fall by accident or by aggression, and when persecution and violence make martyrs out of the baptized, the scope of the loss seems overwhelming.

Friends, we have a great occasion to cry out “praise be to God today, “ the old Hebrew word is alleluia, because Alleluia, Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!) His own family and disciples despaired around the cross at an irreplaceable loss. Irreplaceable for humans, but not irreplaceable for God. As a matter of fact, this was the Father’s plan all along. A punishment for human sin needed to be given out. God wouldn’t be a fair God if He gave a pass. It’d be a travesty of justice. But He loved those who deserved a death sentence too much. You and I are irreplaceable treasures to our loving God. His solution was a great sacrifice – the death of His own Son for the sin of the world. The full extent of His righteous wrath against sin was poured into Jesus on the cross, and then He died.

But you know, something else happened, too. As He died a piece of the temple was destroyed. There was an earthquake, and a curtain that separated the Most Holy Place, where the sacrifice for the sin of the people took place, that curtain tore in two from top to bottom. That Most Holy Place where no one was supposed to lay eyes upon except the High Priest, and then an only one day a year, was suddenly open and visible to all the priests. The sin of the world had been dealt with once and for all and the Most Holy Place, often grieved as irreplaceable had been... replaced. The Most Holy Place was no longer the Most Holy Place.

The Most Holy Place was now personified. The Most Holy Place hanged lifeless on a cross. The Most Holy Place was wrapped in a burial shroud. The Most Holy Place was placed in a tomb, sealed over by a stone. And on Easter, the Most Holy Place, the very body of our Lord Jesus Christ rose to live forever and more than that, He’s just the firstfruits of all those who will

also one day rise – you and me. Jesus is the focus of our worship, our physical temple, the Most Holy Place of sacrifice where the sins of the world – your sins, my sins – are covered. The Most Holy Place mysteriously makes His Church on earth into one “body” with Him, He as the head. You see a manifestation of that body around you in this sanctuary today. But whether this sanctuary stands or falls is besides the point – what matters is Jesus. He’s the Word made flesh. He claims us in baptism. That Most Holy Place comes right to our hands and our lips when we take the Lord’s Supper – that means, for all the miracles and supernatural wonder described in the Old Testament, a person kneeling at this altar for communion has even greater access and intimacy with God than even Abraham and Moses and the prophets hearing His voice. He, the Most Holy Place is absolutely irreplaceable. And He, unlike the cathedral at Notre Dame, or your declining health or dead loved ones or splintered relationships or financial calamity or curtain torn and temples overrun by Babylonian or Roman soldiers is not only irreplaceable – He is indestructible! Alleluia, Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, alleluia!)

When those irreplaceable treasures of people, relationships, health and deep emotional attachments to places and churches are destroyed, as everything in this world one day will be, Jesus is standing at the end. And the promise of Easter is that those things irreplaceable by us, special and worthy of grieving as they are, don’t even put a dent into our Most Holy Place. Jesus stands (that’s what resurrection means – to stand again) – Jesus stands indestructible. And we too will stand again. We will be restored by God better than ever. Because He rose, you will rise, too! Happy Easter – Alleluia, Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!) In Jesus’ name, Amen.