

Sunday, April 21, 2019 – Easter Sunrise
Easter Sunday in Seven Words: “Christ is risen. In him we rise!”

Romans 6: 1-9

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Dialogical Structure

Adapted from CSL “The Gospel in Seven Words”

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!

There is no more significant phrase in any human language than these three words:

Christ is risen! It’s an incredible claim, for if it’s true—and it *is* true!—then everything we know about life and death is turned completely upside down. This morning these three words fill our mouths and they thrill our hearts, for Jesus’s resurrection brings hope to those who are living in despair. It brings joy to those who are overcome by grief. It brings life to those who are living in death. There’s simply no more significant phrase ever spoken than our joy-filled Easter proclamation, “Christ is risen!” He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

For the last six weeks, we have been thinking about the good news we believe as Christians. We’ve been thinking about how we confess the gospel of Jesus Christ. We’ve been trying to narrow it down to just seven words. And I’ve got to tell you, you’ve come up with some great confessions.

[Share a few particularly insightful examples from the congregation.]

These are good and helpful. They reflect a deep and profound faith in your hearts. Thank you for all the thought and energy you put into these confessions. But on this Easter morning I’d like to craft one more version of the gospel. On this great day of resurrection, I’d like to try and capture the significance of Jesus’s victory over the grave using only seven words. Our first three words are already set. As we’ve been saying all morning, “Christ is risen!” And that’s a great way to start. But we’ve still got four more words. We’ve got four more words to capture what makes Jesus’s resurrection so significant for us.

So, as we've been doing all Lent, let's see if we can summarize the Easter gospel in seven words by finishing the sentence.

There are a number of directions we could go. "Christ is risen. Let's go hunt eggs!" Maybe you did find some eggs this morning, but there's so much more to Easter than chocolate and bunnies. How about this? "Christ is risen, when do we eat?!" Maybe you're having ham, or turkey, or steak, or lobster, or a buffet, or a special prix-fixe reservation at a fancy restaurant, or candy from your Easter basket, or breaking your fast from whatever food you gave up during Lent... and now, if you weren't already, you probably are hungry... but that can't be it either. Perhaps some of you are happy to have family home. Maybe you're thinking, "Christ is risen. The gang's all here!" They may be. While I hope that's good, it's not THE Good News, either, and I hope that it's not the bad news.

Truth be told, these things aren't even close to the gospel. The good news is so much more significant. So much more life changing. So much more consequential than these Easter traditions and celebrations. So, let's think about some other options. Let's examine a few, more worthy, possibilities.

Before he died, Jesus told his disciples he would rise from the dead. Several times, actually. John 2:18–22. Matthew 12:39–40. Matthew 16:21. And it wasn't just Jesus. The prophets of old who lived hundreds of years before Jesus was even born had foretold these events as well (Luke 24:45–47).

We'd be mistaken if we thought of Jesus's resurrection as just one more biblical miracle. Or even if we imagined it as simply another sign of God's might. No, Jesus's resurrection was the fulfillment of God's word throughout the ages. It was the core of God's meticulously crafted plan of salvation. Jesus had promised he would rise from the dead, and when he did, he proved his divinity. He vindicated everything he had ever said and done. Because Jesus rose we can trust everything he said throughout his life and ministry.

So how could we capture that in a seven-word confession? How about this: “Christ is risen, just as he said!” That’s true. And that’s very significant. But Easter is about more than past prophecy. Easter is also about the future. So let’s try another.

On Friday we talked about the fact that death rules as lord over this broken creation. None of us can outwit or outsmart or outlast death. The slow and steady march of life is always leading us another step closer to grave.

And yet, the resurrection of Jesus shows that death is no longer in charge. Because of Jesus, death is no longer our master. We still may die. But even if we do, death is no longer the end of our story. Through faith in Christ, and through the promise God makes to us in our baptism, we will live even after death.

So how about these seven words: “Christ is risen, so we’ll live forever!” That’s true. And that’s incredibly significant. It means we need not fear death, and that we have hope for eternal life. But even as Easter is about more than past promises, it’s also about more than eternal life in the future. Easter also changes everything in the present. Right here and right now. Easter changes every single one of us even this morning. So let’s give it one more try.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul talks about baptism. He says this, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). God’s gift to us in baptism is an Easter gift. It is the gift of resurrection. And not just resurrection on the last day. God’s Easter gift to us is new life here and now. It’s a new life in which God raises us above all that is wrong with this world.

He raises us above guilt and shame, for Jesus left our sin in the tomb.

He raises us above selfishness and greed, for Jesus provides for all that we need.

He raises us above resentment and anger, for Jesus fills us with joy and peace.

Do you get it? Because of Easter, we need not live in shame. Because of Easter we need not work so hard to serve ourselves. Because of Easter we can forgive those who have

sinned against us, for Christ has forgiven our sin against him. It's called new life, and it's what God gives you and me here again this day.

I don't know what brought you to worship this morning. Perhaps you've been here all Lent and you've been wondering how we'd confess the gospel in seven words today. Or, perhaps you're here because someone in your family begged you to come. Or maybe you're here simply because that's what you do on Easter Sunday.

Whatever the reason, I want you to know and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. I want you to find the peace and joy that God offers us in light of Jesus's resurrection. I want you to believe, and to confess, this incredibly good news of the gospel. This morning we'll make it simple. Just seven words that change our lives forever.

"Christ is risen! In him we rise!" May God grant it for Jesus's sake—today and everyday! In Jesus' name. Amen.