

Alive!

Richard Dawson Easter Sunday, 20/4/14

Romans 7⁷⁻¹³ / John 14¹⁻⁷

Jesus is alive! This is the clear and unambiguous claim of the Bible and particularly of the New Testament. And we could sit here and debate that till the cows come home but this is the claim the Church was founded upon and still lives by today even if some dispute it. Jesus is alive!

Sometimes it seems to me that Easter becomes all about death – about Jesus' passage towards death; about the trial which led to His death; about the way He was killed and then finally, on this day, about His rising **from death and conquering death!** All that is true but the greater them of Easter isn't death, it is life! Life is the true theme of Easter because Jesus came for life, your life and mine!

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
(John 10)

Jesus redefined what it was to be alive. By doing so he showed that life was not a matter of length of life or of the number of people we have influenced or of material wealth. Rather the things that counted, that really lasted were these... 1. Knowing

the truth (knowledge) 2. Living the Truth (Law) and 3. Being the Truth (Person)

Jesus redefined life through His death and countless of Christians down through the ages have come to understand this when they put their trust in Him as the Bible directs that we should. When they do this we suddenly taste a life that is quite different from the one we knew before – so different in fact that many compare the old life to death. This became such a theme amongst converts that it was used to describe salvation – attaining ‘new life.’ And so this is what Paul describes in our reading today – the state of death that all people come to God in because of our sin.

The difficult thing about this, of course, is that if we haven’t experienced new life, if we haven’t experienced this delightful new taste, we have nothing to compare it with. We believe we are alive but in fact we’re missing out. And this is not something unique. I mean haven’t we all had an experience which woke us up to a new paradigm of life; something we never knew we could experience. This quite common in human experience and the most common place we find it is when we fall in love. Nothing is ever quite the same is it? You fall in love and life up to that point seems pointless, grey, dead! Or when you experience a new understanding of something – a new insight – a new point of view – suddenly life is never quite the same.

And this has been the testimony of countless people down through the ages who have come into an experience of the life Jesus offers us. Once I was dead... now I am alive! I thought I was alive, but in fact I was dead. And so we read in 1 Corinthians

²²for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. (1 Cor 15)

And again in Ephesians

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Eph 2)

But what is the true nature of this new life? It is easy to find a negative answer to this. It is the life apart from sin; against sin; above sin but I want something positive. What is the nature of this new life? The life Jesus offers is defined by three things... They are... 1. Knowing the Truth 2. Living the Truth and 3. Being the Truth – and not necessarily in that order.

The life of Jesus was wrapped up in The Truth. It wasn't just important to Jesus, it was everything. Something about the Truth lay at the centre of everything He did and was so much so that He understood that he **became** the Truth for He said near the end of His life...

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14)

Jesus preached the importance of knowing the truth for He says elsewhere,

³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8)

St Augustine said an amazing thing about this truth. He said, “The Truth is like a Lion. You don’t have to defend it. Let it loose and it will defend itself!”

And Jesus realised that He was the Lion... because he said **³⁷For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18)**

So if Jesus is the truth how does that relate to new life? Again we return to John 12...

¹²Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 12)

Jesus is the light – follow Him and we will know what new life is. Simple as that. New life requires that we know the Truth.

Secondly the life Jesus wins for us on the Cross is a life of **living the truth**. It is one thing to know the Truth but it is quite another to live it. So often I find that I struggle in this regard. I know the truth I should live but I fail to make the crucial step – **to live it!** What's the answer here because frankly this is an incredible problem for us all? Life makes hypocrites out of everyone and even Paul admits that he is no different...

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Rom 7)

The answer to this problem comes in the next chapter of Romans and in short it is this... the Spirit of God gives us a new focus – a focus which calls us away from ourselves and our bodies and our desires and towards God. When we accept this new focus we find ourselves living the Truth because we are renewed from within.

¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Cor 5)

Christ calls us to Himself **so that we can live out the Truth.** Nothing short of a new creation will do because our motivations come into play here. Unless we can change them we won't live in the Truth – we'll only end up doing what we've always done which is to live **with** the truth – not **in** it!

Christ helps us to know the Truth, to live the Truth and, finally, to **be** the Truth. New life requires that we **become** the Truth. If you think this language is a bit strong read the NT. Here's a good one from our reading today...

²⁰**So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.** ²¹**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5)**

'That we might become...' New life, real life, is about becoming something – not just knowing it and not just doing it – **new life becomes!**

God calls us to become a new creature in Christ – to be someone new and though this takes time it is the great reward of Christ – that we might live this new life because of His death and resurrection. But how do we go from doing to being?

I heard a great testimony the other night from Brad Thorn the amazing League and Rugby player. At 22 he was handed a million dollar contract and from that time on he wanted for

nothing. And as he said he lived that life to the fullest but he sat down in a hotel room one night a few years after this, his life full of stuff he didn't really need and his bank balance overflowing and he realised something – all this stuff didn't make a life and it certainly didn't provide satisfaction. He was rich, famous and really empty inside. In short, he wasn't alive. So having a Christian background he sat down and he asked God to help him find life and guess what – God did. Now he stands for God. It was remarkable to me the other day that despite being so badly injured in that game against the Bulls that he won't be able to play again this season he was leading a group of obviously Christian Highlanders in prayer on the field after the game. I was frankly deeply impressed.

We become by growing our relationship with Christ – by allowing Christ into our lives – by listening to Him – by lifting Him up. Jesus said...

³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12)

That friends is what happens when we **become the Truth**. We, us, ourselves... we begin to **stand for something**. We begin to be symbols of God in the world. We take on the image of Christ – an image which changes things wherever it is because it **is the Truth!**

This is the New Life that Christ's death and resurrection has bequeathed to you and I. A life of knowing the Truth, living the Truth and being the Truth and it begins for us with a simply request – God let me live that life too!

New Life! That's what we celebrate today. The promise of a new life which is new every morning. And you can know this new life if you want to. Simply ask. Ask God to give you His life; to enter into the Truth of Jesus and He who is faithful above all else will do it for you.