

# Alive!

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*Sunday 27 March*

Psalm 27<sup>1-4</sup> / Matthew 4<sup>12-17</sup> / Colossians 1<sup>18-20</sup> / Colossians 2<sup>6-10</sup>

Jesus said I am the Way, the Truth and... the Life! Today we see just what he meant! Today we gain a glimpse of what Life is 'in all of its fullness.' **'I have come,' said Jesus, that they might have life, life in all its fullness.'**

We are perhaps used to thinking that Easter is about death; after all, didn't Jesus die on the Cross? Yes, He did but death wasn't the end of the story. The end of the story is Life! The true theme of Easter then, isn't death – rather, it's life out of death; it's the triumph of life **over** death!

Jesus is Risen! [He is Risen indeed!] x3

What is life for you? What is truly living? What is the best life?

Easter Sunday calls us all to think about this question for today we celebrate life – life in all its fullness! What do you imagine would be a great life? The big four in today's world and down through the ages have been wealth, fame, achievement and popularity? How does this sit with you?

Jesus challenged all these things during His ministry and none so much as He challenged wealth. The OT and His own community thought wealth was a definite sign of God's blessing but Jesus said

**“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt 6<sup>19-21</sup>)**

Life doesn't consist in what you have or what you spend.

And about fame Jesus said,

**“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 6<sup>1-4</sup>)**

Fame is not life. It can't bring life or replace life.

And about power Jesus says,

**“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. <sup>26</sup>It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt 20)**

So I ask again this morning. In what does life consist? What is it to truly live!

The Easter message is simple... **here is life! This is true life. This is where to look for life!** But what is the nature of this Life?

1. It is like light
2. It is like substance compared to shadow.
3. It is the head and not the tail

Life is like light. The Psalmist proclaims God as his light and Jesus said 'I am the light of the world.' We are used to thinking of light as the great illuminator of all there is because, of course, it is by light that we see. But it is much much more. Light is, in fact, the source of all life. Nothing living would exist without it. Light and its cousin heat make life possible wherever it is found. Without them there would be no life. Yes there is life in the depths of the sea where no light can penetrate but this life is dependent on the volcanic activity on the ocean floor – the heat that flows from this.

Resurrection life is like this. It is the heart, the source of true life and much like light it is designed to be uncovered; to be exposed, to be on show. The life of God within us is a light – a light that is designed to be seen and when it is not seen it becomes a darkness within us – a secret which we almost have to work at to keep. Jesus said 'let your light shine' not simply because he wanted some publicity for God but because this is how God's life within us works – it rejoices in the things it brings to light. It grows with everything it illuminates. I received an

email from a mother yesterday. I won't reveal from whom it came but let me read it for you...

Hi there

I just want to say a big thankyou for the wonderful pastoral care and teaching that my 'child' had over the time they were in Dunedin as a student.

'This person' loved their time at Leith Valley and will always take with them all the love, care and teaching they received. Bless you as you continue to minister to our adult children.

Somehow the light of God was able to shine through you here at Leith. What does that do for you? For me it simply grows the desire I have to do this better. To be a better home church for students. To provide better care, better teaching, better covering, better company for all those who come to Dunedin seeking both education and God. My light is shining brighter today.

Are you a Christian? Are you a Christ-follower? Are you one who believes in Jesus? Then let God's life in you **escape! It cannot simply be a cerebral thing!** Like light it exists to shine!

Jesus said <sup>'16</sup>"**No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.'** (Luke 8)

Our lamps may be lit but are they on display? Are they being expressed in some public way? This is the challenge of Easter – Jesus would say to us **‘Let my Resurrection Life shine!’**

Secondly resurrection life is like substance compared to shadow. In Colossians 2 Paul says this...

**<sup>16</sup>Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. <sup>17</sup>These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**

A shadow is something formed by the blocking of light from a light source as it is reflected on a background. And shadows can be incredibly accurate and life like. So much so that there are a plethora of references to being fooled by shadows as the saying ‘chasing shadows’ reflects. Shadows can also take on a frightening size. Formed by a light falling on a surface that is far away from us shadows can become huge convincing us that we are moments away from annihilation. There is a wonderful little proverb that goes ‘Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow.’ How true!

But shadow also stands for something far more fundamental in our existence. Martin Luther King is quoted as saying that ‘Everything we see is a shadow cast by everything we do not see.’ In this King wasn’t saying that nothing we see is real but that there is a reality far greater behind that which we see so

much so that what we see is likely only a poor reflection of the true nature of Life. Thus it behooves us to understand the shadow side of our existence – the stuff we can't or can barely see.

How can we get around this? Paul says that Christ is the **substance** of what is to come. In other words he is the reality of what we can't see – of all the life that is hidden from us and therefore, only as we look to Christ can we see past the shadows of our life. Only as we look to Christ can we see the shadows in their true perspective.

Only one thing defeats a shadow and that is a light placed in front of it. When Christ is placed **in front of us** we need not fear the shadow. When Christ is made Lord of our life the shadows don't so much disappear as become simply a new place of seeing, a darkness lit by the love of God.

Finally resurrection life is the head not the tail. In our reading from Colossians we began in this way...

<sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Col 1)

And then later in Chapter 2...

<sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup>and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. (Col 2)

What is Christ? Christ is the **head**. Why is He the head? Because **in Him all the fullness [read 'the life'] of God God is pleased to dwell...'**

Where is life? Life is **in Christ**

What is the head? It is the place from which all decisions are made; from which the body is directed and from which life is ordered. If the head can be misdirected, then everything else follows. If it can't be then the body stays on course. A corollary of the word head in the New Testament is the word '**Lord.**' If Christ is our Lord then He is our head and if He is our head then life follows from Him and not just any life, but true life, lasting life, **eternal life!**

In the NRSV version of the NT there are 592 uses of the term Lord. It is perhaps the most used nomenclature there and while it is used to refer to God and at times to describe a person who is of high rank it is also used to refer directly to Jesus in the phrase 'the Lord Jesus Christ' 62 times.

If Christ is our head, He is our Lord. If He is our Lord then He is the one to whom we owe our complete and undying allegiance to. He is the one who provides the ultimate direction for our

lives and he does so not to take away life from us but so the **we might have life and have it in all its fullness!**

**As Lord** Christ is our direction and our goal in all we do. Try it see how it works out. It won't deliver you from the world's problems but it will deliver you from the world. It won't deliver you from the problem of evil but it will deliver you from evil. It won't deliver you from the daily battle with sin but it will deliver you from sin. It won't deliver you from death but it will give you eternal life!

Today Jesus is alive and His life is now available to all who would request it and seek it. Are we ready to live!

Christ is Risen!

He is Risen again!