

A Six-Day Easter Devotional



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"Because He Lives" is one of the most beloved and frequently used modern hymns celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. The song speaks to the fact that since Jesus rose from the dead, we can have purpose, meaning, and hope throughout the challenges and trials of life. Also, as we sing this song, we are reminded that because Jesus is alive and has conquered death, we can have the assurance of eternal life with Him in Heaven. What a wonderful message!

As a church, we will use this six-part devotional series to reflect on what the resurrection of Jesus means to our daily lives. Also, we will take opportunity to prepare our hearts for our Easter celebration in the days leading up to this great Christian event.

So, take the time to read each devotional and reflect on what you've read. Sing an Easter hymn after you've finished. Then, pray and thank Jesus for Who He is and all He's done.

As we celebrate the joy of Easter, may these short devotionals remind us of the power and purpose believers have in Jesus because He lives.





Because He Lives

John 14:19-20

Jesus said to His disciples the same thing He says to bornagain believers today: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Can we really believe that? Are we headed for a letdown if we do?

Yes, we can believe this promise! We can believe it because of who Jesus Christ is, the proof of the resurrection, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Notice first that Jesus did not say, "Because I shall live, ye shall live also." He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Jesus made this statement before His death and resurrection. The implication is that His resurrection was a foregone conclusion, because, as God, Jesus is eternal. His essence is life. He is the source of life. His is the inextinguishable life.

Most of us know couples in our church who recently had a baby. We rejoice with them, and sometimes we say that he or she is a "little miracle." That's certainly an appropriate thing to say. After all, from where do babies come? Of course, they come from parents. Ultimately, though, each newborn baby is a gift from God. Otherwise, try to explain how fertilization could create a completely unique personality with a new DNA structure. Explain how the baby's heart started. Explain where this little fragile life was derived with all its complexity. And do we seriously think that if we go back far enough, we are going to find that life was formed from inanimate objects? Does that really make sense to anyone? Here's what makes sense: Because we see

personality, beauty, intelligence, and morality in the universe there must be an infinite, personal, and moral First Cause or Divine Being who has life in Himself. Only the God presented in the Bible has the credentials and character to be such a being. This One True God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, emphasis added). All life comes from Him.

And human life is meant to be more than earthly existence. Ultimately, it is a quality of existence that culminates in the presence of God forever. Only Jesus can offer eternal life and save us from the penalty of sin in Hell.

In our passage, Jesus told His disciples that there was soon coming a day when the unbelieving world would not see Him, but His disciples would. And after His resurrection, they did! The eyewitness accounts of the resurrection provide infallible proof of the resurrection of Jesus and that He was and is the Creator God. This is what separates biblical Christianity from all other forms of faith out there. The foundational tenant of Christianity is the deity of Jesus and His power to raise from the dead. And the resurrection of Jesus was attested to by many eyewitnesses.

Some would say that they lied. But there was at least an empty tomb for them to be heard and their testimony considered. And why would they die for a lie? Many of these same eyewitnesses were martyred for their faith.

One of the most convincing accounts of seeing Jesus after His resurrection came from Saul of Tarsus who previously persecuted Christians. After his encounter with Jesus, Saul, later known as Paul, became the most effective and powerful witness of Christ to the place where Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire by the end of the First Century. Paul provided one of the most persuasive witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Some of the greatest minds in history became believers after considering the overwhelming proof of the resurrection of Jesus.

Furthermore, one of the greatest reasons we can trust the promise of Jesus is the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives to give the awareness that Christ is with us. He is alive and those who believe it have that witness in their hearts.

In the context of John 14, Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit coming after He leaves the earth. He said to believers that they will know Him because He shall be in them (verse 17). Verse 26 says that the Holy Spirit will bring the presence of Christ. So, the disciples' experiential connection to Jesus after His resurrection would not just be related to physical sight, which only happened on a few occasions after Jesus rose from the dead. Their seeing Jesus would be of spiritual perception also.

And we can see Jesus today. The Bible says that our eyes can be enlightened by faith in which we can perceive His work in our mind, apprehend and admire Him in worship, and look to Him for all of our needs. If we do, He will show Himself to us. The distinguishing trait of all believers is that they have seen Jesus in the full spiritual sense. It's because of this fact that Christianity is not a religion to them but a personal relationship, daily walking and talking with Jesus. His Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God.

Christian, because of these amazing realizations, we can take Jesus' promise of eternal life to the grave. We can build our lives on this assurance and face the future with confidence. All other foundations are sinking sand.

This devotional series is entitled "Because He Lives." These short scriptural studies are designed to fortify our faith in the promise of eternal life given by Jesus and provided by His death, burial, and resurrection. Let's draw comfort and strength from these truths leading up to our Easter celebration together.

We sing it often this time of year . . .

Because He lives I can face tomorrow;

Because He lives all fear is gone;

Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth the living—just because He lives.

"Because He Lives" by William Gaither. © William Gaither, Inc., CCL# 406122



In Philippians 3:10, Paul said that his goal in life was to know Jesus and "the power of His resurrection." What does that mean? I submit that these two concepts go together: One cannot know Jesus without experientially knowing the power of His resurrection in their life.

This experiential knowledge of Jesus and His power is what Easter is all about. It's not about bunnies and baskets—however cute they are. They may be colorful accourrements to accentuate the celebration of the day. But the focus of our Easter celebration should be about knowing Jesus personally and experiencing the power of His resurrection.

As we prepare for Easter, let's think about the resurrection power of Jesus.

When we read the account in Matthew 27:62–28:6, we get the impression that the Jewish leaders and Pilate, the Roman Governor, were trying to do all they could do to stop the inevitable. These men tried to stop the resurrection of Jesus with a stone and a couple of soldiers. It was a foolish effort of man to thwart the power of Almighty God. Jesus said in John 10:18, "No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (clarification added).

When we read about the angel at the tomb of Jesus in the latter verses of our passage, we should not be confused. The angel did not roll the stone away to free Jesus. The angel was there as a powerful witness of God that Jesus was already gone. And the earthquake was just a special effect.

If Jesus could create life, certainly He has the power to defeat death. If He has the power to speak the universe into existence, certainly He has the power to get past a tiny stone and make an earthquake just to emphasize the point.

And why did Jesus wait three days to rise from the dead? He did so just to prove He was truly dead in the first place. The number three in the Bible has a common theme. It speaks of finality and completeness. We see it all over the Scriptures. One of those occasions is found in the Old Testament where we read that the meat left over from the sacrifices was destroyed the third day (Leviticus 7:17 and 19:7). That's because after three days the meat was considered spoiled or corrupted. We say today, "Three strikes and you're out." They would say, "Three days and it's out." Jesus waited three days, in part, for validation that He did die.

Of course, He also waited three days to rise from the dead to fulfill prophecy. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:38–40).

And finally, Jesus rose three days after His death to resurrect on Sunday, which provides a metaphor of priority and sets forth the principle of priority in our worship. Sunday is the first day of the week. What a metaphor! Jesus rose from the dead to take His place of preeminence in our lives and in the life of His church. If we really know Him, we will make Him the primary focus of our time, attention, and service. He gives us the power to do so.

As we consider these truths, we must understand that to know Jesus is not simply to give mental assent to some historical facts. This is not an academic exercise. To know Jesus is not knowing about Him or having a religious identification with Him. To know Him is to have the same power that resurrected Jesus at work in our lives. To know the power of His resurrection is to know what it means to be born again and given a new spiritual

life. To know the power of His resurrection is to have the assurance that someday we will be raised from the dead to enjoy eternal life escaping eternal separation from God in Hell. To know the power of His resurrection is to draw from this same power daily, to put Jesus first in all we do, and to cooperate with Him to defeat our sinful ways.

Think of the power of the sun. The resurrection power of Jesus is more powerful than that. It is the power to make a person fit for Heaven and recreate them with a new life and for a new life on earth.

Since, as Christians, we have a relationship with Jesus, we should make it our goal to increasingly know Him better and know Him more. The natural effect of such knowledge is to know the power of His resurrection working in our lives to conquer our sin, to change our spirit, to give us strength to serve Him—and all to a greater degree. Because He lives, we can see all of this happen and more.

"In Christ Alone"

(Verse 3)

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the World by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His, and He is mine,
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

"In Christ Alone" by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend.
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It's Not Over

Psalm 118:17-24

Have you ever felt at some point in your life that you were on the brink of death? Maybe you escaped a close call in an accident. Maybe you lived through a serious surgery or devastating illness. Did you feel as if your mortality was banging on the door, and you were one moment away from passing over to the next life?

That is how the Psalmist felt in Psalm 118.

This psalm is a song of thanksgiving sung by King David who escaped death in battle. At the time of writing, he was leading the people of Israel to the temple to worship the Lord and thank Him for His deliverance. His personal testimony was this: "I shall not die, but live" (v. 17) or "I thought it was over for me, but it was not."

In verse 18, he says that God was using this life-threatening trial to chastise him.

God chastises or disciplines His children. He allows affliction in their lives to do so. Sometimes that affliction takes a child of God to the brink. God does this to correct us, to purge us from sin, and to prepare us for greater service for Him.

To prune a rose bush, sometimes you have to cut off most of what's there and take it down to only a tiny twig of life. The Psalmist felt this way. But God did not go all the way. David was delivered so that he could declare the works of the Lord (v. 17).

Like him, if we have a purpose to praise the Lord with our life,

we are more likely to see the amazing deliverance of God. And God will not take us home until we are finished with the culmination of our allotted time of ministry. For this man, it got worse before it got better, but God spared him in order to give him a testimony of salvation and praise.

Now King David stands with the people at the door of the temple (v. 19). He felt purged of sin and prepared to go in with right-eous worship. Today, it would be like saying, "Open the doors of the church, save me a seat. I am ready to go in!"

If we are breathing this morning and ready to praise and worship the Lord this Easter season, it has taken a measure of deliverance for that to happen, and we would be wise to acknowledge that fact. We all need to thank God for life today!

In verse 20, we read that David entered the gate of the Lord.

David knew this fact: The gate of righteousness is the Lord's gate. In ourselves, none of us have the righteousness necessary to enter into the presence of God. And according to the New Testament, we certainly won't enter into Heaven by our own merit (Romans 3:23–28; Romans 4:4–5; Galatians 2:16, 3:10–11; Ephesians 2:8–9). It is God's gate, and it is only by His righteousness received by grace that we can enter. And if we have that assurance, we have something to celebrate. Even in death we can say, "It is not over for me!"

Now based on his own experience of escaping death, David looks ahead to the resurrection of the Messiah. In an amazing twist, he prophetically relates his experience to the resurrection of the Messiah to come. We know this to be true because in Acts 4:10–12, the Apostle Peter cites this passage and relates it to the resurrection of Jesus and how that He was alive to form the foundation for the Church. The True Church is made up of all born-again believers around the world and is manifested in many local assemblies. We are built on the foundation of Jesus corporately as a church. Also, individually, we must build our lives on Jesus only. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Here in Florida, we have seen in the news reports about sinkholes. One sinkhole swallowed a whole house and the man inside while he was in his bedroom. Without warning the ground beneath the house gave way. Later it was discovered that his house was built on a shallow layer of limestone that slowly dissolved by rainwater.

Our personal lives can either be built on sinking sand or on the strong foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. He is rejected by some and built upon by others.

Our passage says that the exaltation of Jesus to build His Church is "the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23). This event came to be by the greatest miracle of all times—the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is a day to be celebrated. And the new era to follow would be celebrated by a new day, the first day of the week on which Jesus rose from the dead. The old day of distinct celebration and worship was the Sabbath, the last day of the week. The new day would be Sunday.

When John said in Revelation 1:10 that He was "in the spirit on the Lord's day," he assuredly was referring to Psalm 118:24. Every Sunday, we celebrate the Lord's Day. And we are to rejoice and be glad in it. We are not to be somber. We are not to be stifled by formalism and man-made tradition. We come to Sunday worship with exuberance in light of the resurrection of Jesus. We are to express enthusiastically that we are alive, made righteous in Jesus, and able by His grace to worship Him.

Once a year on Easter Sunday, we accentuate what happens every Sunday when we concentrate the focus of our worship on the resurrection of Jesus.

Even if we are suffering at the time, we know that in Christ we will be made alive! No wonder David said in another psalm, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). Jesus is alive! He proved His deity and delivered us from eternal death by rising from the dead. We have everything to celebrate!

Let's come to our Easter celebration with that spirit. Let's not be discouraged in our trials. It may have to get worse before it gets better. But we know that our lives are not limited to this earthly existence. Through it all, God wants us to declare His works and come to Him in righteousness. And since it is not over for us yet and since we have Heaven to look forward to, let's give God the worship that He deserves.

Because He lives, we have every reason to celebrate!

"He Lives"

(Verse 3)

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing

Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!

The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,

None other is so loving, so good, and kind.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart!

You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart.

"He Lives" by Alfred Ackley.
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The Resurrected Life

John 12:23-26

A fter Jesus entered into Jerusalem in preparation for His being delivered to die for the sins of the world, some Greeks asked His disciples if they could have an audience with Him. They said, "We would see Jesus" (John 12:21). It is interesting how Jesus responded to this request. He presented to them the path and process to His glorification. We can see this illustrated in John 12:23–24. Here is the process: humiliation, death, resurrection, and exaltation.

Jesus then intimates that any that would truly know Him and serve Him must follow this same path. The intent of the Gospel message, then, is not perfectly fulfilled with a person simply coming to Jesus in faith for their salvation from sin. That same person has been saved to serve the Lord. Salvation includes a person being identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In other words, salvation anticipates one losing their former life and gaining a new life in the service of the Lord. There is the death of an old life and a resurrection to a new one.

Let's consider this further.

Jesus' ultimate exaltation and path to eternal fruitfulness first came through a process of being humiliated. Like a seed that was sown, He fell to the ground.

We understand the analogy. A seed has to be planted into a place of obscurity. It must go into the dirt to be raised up as a flowering plant. In like manner, Jesus left Heaven to come to earth.

To follow this path, we too must humble ourselves in order to receive salvation. It strikes a deadly blow to our pride to learn that we cannot earn eternal salvation by good works. We must humbly repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus only and His finished work on the cross in payment for our sins. Beyond that, we must continually accept God's humbling process as He molds us and makes us a fruitful servant for Him.

Look at what Jesus prayed in verse 27. He prayed, "Father, save me from this hour." And then He quickly added, "but for this cause came I unto this hour." If we are humbly following this same course, we must also turn our prayers from "Get me out of this trial" to "Use this trial in my life for Your greater purpose." We should not pray that God will get us out of trouble, but that He would grow us out of trouble.

The unbelieving world talks about climbing to success. Jesus talks about falling. In God's economy, humility proceeds honor and death precedes life in its fullest expression.

Every spring, farmers around the world plant many seeds. But only some of those same seeds sprout and grow. That's because most seeds have a hard shell or coat called the testa; the harder the coat, the longer the germination process may take (if it happens at all). Seeds with a harder coating may never germinate or may take longer to germinate simply because the shell prevents the expansion of the embryo inside. That hard coat may block the entrance of water. That hard coat may impede oxygen exchange.

The death of the seed that Jesus is talking about is the process of the seed's outer shell decaying to the degree that it is broken so the life inside can come out.

We, as humans, develop hard coatings. We have long-held sin patterns and habits. Also, we may have become hardened emotionally by the hurts of life. Many have a thickened wall over their soul. They don't trust anyone. Practically, many people have also surrounded themselves with activities, relationships, possessions, and pursuits that obstruct God's work in their hearts.

To be saved and then serve the Lord faithfully, that outer shell must be broken; our pride must be put to death—our way, our will, our wants. We must lose our selfish identity so that the life of Christ may live through us. And when God begins to kill off some of those selfish sinful desires, we may go through a winter season. Our life may seem barren. That's because the old way is passing. But like a broken seed in the cold soil, someday with increasing warmth of God's Word we will arise and be fruitful. We can't really live until we die. To find our life, we have to lose it (v. 25).

Jesus exemplified this principle to the ultimate degree. He understood that nothing could be gained for eternity without earthly sacrifice.

Jesus even said that we must hate life in this world (v. 25). What does this mean? It means we must love our life of service for God so much that our aspirations for this wicked world disappear. We come to despise worldly living.

Jesus did say in verse 26 that "if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." But we have to give up before we gain. God's eternal blessings are the by-product of the sacrificed life.

Our modern philosophy of life is a matter of hanging in there and holding on. We struggle with survival. We struggle to hold on to our job, hold on to our house, hold on to our money, hold on to our family. When we hear Jesus say to "let go and lose it," this creates a conflict of interest in our hearts. But think about this: We're going to lose it all anyway. So Jesus is leading us to transfer control. He is working in our hearts to break that inordinate sense of selfish possessiveness. He is weaning us from the things of this world to set our affection on another world. When we lose this one, we gain that one: a life in the flesh for a life in the spirit, this barren life given up for a better one—a resurrected life!

Like a seed we must fall; we must be buried. The fleshly shell must be broken and die so that the life of Christ can be planted within us and, from the inside out, can grow and bear much fruit.

And so we ask ourselves this Easter season, "Can we really celebrate the resurrection of Jesus without joining in it ourselves?" and "How can we join in His resurrection without first joining in the death that came before it?" We have to die to our selfish desires and ways so that we might truly live for Jesus. Because He lives, we can too!

"Yet Not | But Through Christ in Me"

(Verse 3)

No fate I dread; I know I am forgiven.

The future's sure; the price, it has been paid,
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon,
And He was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold: my sin has been defeated.

Jesus, now and ever is my plea.

Oh, the chains are released; I can sing: I am free!

Yet not I but through Christ in me.

"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me" by Michael Farren, Rich Thompson, Jonny Robinson © CityAlight Music, CCL#406122





Set for Eternity

Psalm 16:10-11

In Acts chapter 2, the Apostle Peter quotes Psalm 16 and says by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the psalmist David was not just talking about himself, but he was speaking of the Messiah at the same time. In other words, David was appropriating the future resurrection of the Messiah to his own experience. He was saying in essence, "Because the Messiah will rise again from the dead, I will too—I am set for eternity!"

If we believe in Jesus and His finished work for salvation, we can say that we are set for eternity as well.

For years there was a TV ad for a lottery scratch-off game entitled "Set for Life" where a person could win \$100,000 a year for the rest of their life. What they did not say on the ad is that after taxes, the winning person would receive over 30% less. They also did not say in that ad that the odds of winning the top prize are 1 in 1 million.

The Bible says, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). In other words, what good is it to be financially set for this earthly life and miss out on eternal life in Heaven?

The way to eternal life in Heaven has been secured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we don't have to scratch off countless tickets to receive its reward.

In Psalm 16:11, David said to God, "Thou wilt show me the path of life." David understood something: There is a way to eternal life, and God is the only One who can show us.

To have eternal life, we cannot rely on our sense of direction. Proverbs 14:12 says that "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Man's way is a way that exalts man and human achievement. But God's way is a way of humble repentance. It is a way that rests completely on the perfect and finished work of Jesus on the cross. It's a singular way: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Psalm 16 ends with David speaking of being in God's presence forever. That's the destination of the believer. When a bornagain believer in Christ dies, he goes directly to the presence of God. Paul said to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Why is the presence of God highlighted as the ultimate description of Heaven? Because to see and know Him is the capstone and ultimate goal of our eternal existence.

"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Knowing God and seeing Him is the highest aspiration in life. God is the ultimate source of joy. Without Him, Heaven would not be Heaven. So the greatest attraction of Heaven is the One from whom flows eternal life and all eternal pleasures. The resurrection of Jesus secures our place in the presence of God.

The God who made us knows what is truly pleasurable. Heaven is a place of eternal pleasure—pure pleasures. We each have a God-given longing for these pleasures. Our natural desires are rooted in the instinctive inclination that someday we will leave this sin-cursed earth and spend eternity with God. Some seek to suppress those desires simply because they love their sin. That is so tragic. Sin is the source of all sorrow, sickness, and affliction.

God's goal for us lies beyond this temporal life and is a place of true, tangible pleasures—devoid of sin and without measure.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can have the assurance of eternal life with Him. He said to His disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). He made life and He conquered death. Because He lives we can be set for eternity. What a wonderful thought this Easter season.

"One Day"

(Chorus)

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming—O glorious day!





Jesus in the Midst

John 20:19-21

Our passage today records the first appearance of Jesus Christ to His disciples together after His resurrection. He appeared "in the midst" of them. This phrase speaks of the special and personal presence of God.

There is a sense in which God is everywhere. Jeremiah 23:24 says, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill the heaven and earth? saith the Lord." God's presence is the power that sustains the universe.

But there is also a sense in which God shows up in a more personal and direct way. He is with us every day as we walk with Him. James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

Jesus is also with us when we gather in His name. Matthew 18:20 says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I believe the appearance of Jesus after His resurrection and to His disciples who were gathered together was a symbolic gesture to manifest this truth. He did not wait but appeared unto them the same day of His resurrection. This was Sunday—and from this point on, the disciples met on the first day of the week. Jesus' appearance gave honor to this day. He sanctified it with His special presence in the midst of His disciples. We enjoy that same special presence every time we meet on Sundays. And when Jesus meets with us, He will give us the same things that He gave His disciples on this day.

He gave them comfort. In verse 19, Jesus said to them, "Peace be

unto you." This was more than a customary greeting. Jesus said this in a specific and particular sense because He found them in a condition of fear. Without a sense of the special presence of Jesus in our lives, we are prime candidates for a condition of fear.

Because of our propensity for fear or anxiety, we look for physical and psychological crutches. We eat for comfort. We become workaholics to take care of ourselves. We become perfectionists trying to control our environment in order to soothe our insecurities. Some take certain mood altering drugs or drink their feelings away. Jesus reveals Himself to us through His Word and through the impression of His Holy Spirit in our hearts and says, "Peace." Like He said to His disciples in John 20, He says to us today, "I'm here, don't fear."

He also gave them confidence. In verse 20, we read that Jesus took time to reassure His disciples of the truth of His resurrection and the reality of His presence among them. He showed them the wounds on His body. In mercy and grace, Jesus empathized with their tendency to doubt and gave them the evidence that they needed for continuing faith. Later, in verses 27–30, Jesus even accommodated Thomas and his demand for evidence.

Jesus did not leave them or us with an unreasonable faith or irrational faith. There is the empty tomb, the eyewitness accounts, the actions of His disciples who gave their lives for Christ, the amazing compilation of the Scriptures, and its historical impact. There is certainly enough proof to give us confidence about the resurrection of Jesus. And when we draw close to Him knowing that He is in our midst, God speaks to us and does things in our lives to confirm our faith by working to bring blessing, and deliverance, and courage, and strength.

Finally, in this post-resurrection meeting with His disciples, Jesus gave them a commission (v. 21). After reassuring them, Jesus gives them a mission.

You'll notice that the commission is preceded by another statement of peace. He did this to encourage them to receive it,

because there would be much trouble and trial attached to it. The commission was to carry the message of salvation through Jesus Christ throughout the whole world.

Jesus was sent to seek and to save people from sin and Hell, and so are we. Jesus was sent fully empowered to do His mission. All of us are sent to preach the Gospel. And we go in the power of Jesus Christ.

I like the word "send." It's an active word. "Mom is going to send you to the grocery store." "I will send you the check in the mail." "Send me a text."

We haven't just been placed. We've been sent. We were meant to be sent.

Later, Jesus said to them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Isn't great to know that we don't go for God alone. Because He lives, we have Jesus with us on the journey and calling of faith.

So what do we take from this account? Well, there is nothing we cannot do in God's will if Jesus is in the midst. There is no limit to what God can do through this church if Jesus is in the midst. There is no peace we cannot find, no joy that will elude us, and no job that will go undone if Jesus is in the midst and we draw from His power. His special presence gives of comfort, confidence, and the commission and power to preach the Gospel. He is risen and He is with us today. We just have be aware of His presence, draw close to Him, and seek His strength in all we do. Because He lives, we can do all that He has called us to do. Let's relish in that truth as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus our Savior.

"Because He Lives"

God sent His Son—they called Him Jesus;

He came to love, heal, and forgive.

He lived and died to buy my pardon;

An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Because He lives I can face tomorrow;

Because He lives all fear is gone;

Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth the living—just because He lives.

"Because He Lives" by William Gaither. © William Gaither, Inc., CCL# 406122

