

EASTER VICTORY!
Sermon for Easter Sunday, 2020
Revelation 19:11-16

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Revelation 19:11-16: ¹¹ **Then I saw heaven opened, and look! There was a white horse, and the One who was sitting on it is called “Faithful and True,” and in righteousness He judges and makes war.** ¹² **His eyes are like a flame of fire and on His head there are many crowns. He has a name written on Him, which no one knows but He Himself.** ¹³ **He is clothed in a garment that has been dipped in blood, and His name is called “the Word of God.”** ¹⁴ **The armies in heaven, dressed in white and clean fine linen, were following Him on white horses.** ¹⁵ **A sharp sword comes out of His mouth, that with it He may strike down the nations. He Himself will rule them with an iron sceptre. He Himself treads the winepress of the furious wrath of God Almighty.** ¹⁶ **He has a name written on His garment and on His thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“The Lord has risen! He has risen indeed!”

Today is a day of victory and a celebration of our great champion, Jesus, pictured in our text today as the One who is seated on a white horse, the One who is called **“Faithful and True.”** God’s faithfulness is like a double-edged sword: *“Therefore, you shall know that the LORD, your God, is God, the faithful God, who keeps His Covenant and His mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and who keep His Commandments! However, He repays to his face and will destroy each of those who hate Him”* (Deuteronomy 7:9-10). Jesus is called True because He is consistent and loyal. Earlier, John had recorded that Jesus had introduced Himself to the Laodiceans as *“The Amen, the Witness who is faithful and true”* (3:14).

At first glance, when we read the words of our text, we may be a bit afraid of Him because He seems threatening with blazing fire and a sharp sword and because **He Himself treads the winepress of the furious wrath of God Almighty.** But we notice His power - He is able to overcome all and is victorious. Today on this Easter we celebrate our Lord’s victory over Satan and over death. It really is a day to celebrate.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is the greatest hero and warrior ever, but we last left Him on Good Friday hanging on a cross. He had just declared, *“It is finished,”* and then voluntarily gave up His life. His body went limp and His heart stopped, leaving some to wonder, *“How can He be victorious if He is dead?”*

Our hero is not dead, but alive, having defeated death. Look again: **“I saw heaven opened, and look! There was a white horse, and the One who was sitting on it is called “Faithful and True,” and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”** One thing we immediately notice in this revelation given to St. John is that this Rider is not a statue. He’s not carved in marble or made of bronze. He is alive and powerful, and is actively at war, with the armies in heaven following Him.

We all know who this is: it is none other than Jesus! What a grand picture of Him! He is no longer a captive humiliated by soldiers. He is no longer beaten and whipped. His head is not bowed. His body is not in a grave, but has, as St. Paul writes, *“been raised from the dead”* (1 Corinthians 15:20).

That's what today, this Easter day, is all about! It's all about victory! Death has been conquered! There is no doubt, Jesus had certainly died. As a matter of fact, after He was already dead, the soldiers stabbed Him in the heart to make sure He was dead.¹ His body was then placed in a grave and sealed tight.

"The blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin," and *"He is the propitiation for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 1:7; 2:2). That victory was clear when Jesus said, *"It is finished!"*

Yet one more foe must be vanquished: Death. Once again Paul writes, *"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"* (1 Corinthians 15:26). Jesus' empty tomb makes it clear that He is more powerful than death, and claims victory over that last enemy.

Jesus met death up close. He let death grab hold of Him, just as He permitted the soldiers to take Him away in the Garden. He volunteered to die. Every lamb that had been sacrificed on Jewish altars for the previous 1,400 years had foreshadowed, promised, and predicted the death of the Lamb of God. The God-man, Jesus, paid the penalty as the perfect, law-keeping human and as the only One who has ever lived who was big enough, because He is also true God, to make the perfect sacrifice to cover the sin and guilt of the entire world. But Jesus did something no one else has ever done - He destroyed death! He arose. He is stronger than the grave! Jesus was alive! Jesus is alive! ***The mighty Rider on the white horse is a victorious Rider.***

There is no doubt. The Bible lists over a dozen different appearances of the risen Jesus, including one time when there were five hundred people present.² Most of the Gospel accounts, including St. Paul's account of the resurrection, were written during the lifetime of thousands of people who were alive at the time of the first Easter. If it were not true, they would have said so and written so. Then Christianity would have become just another fairy tale. If it had not happened, you would have expected books to be written by the Jewish leaders and the Romans that would have refuted the Gospel accounts, but so many knew either from personal experience or from what they heard directly from people who had experienced it firsthand that Jesus actually did rise miraculously from the grave.

How important that is to all of us. We all know death is coming for us too. We try our best to push it away. Millions of dollars are spent trying to treat cancers, heart disease, and some of the more common threats to life. We may be able to postpone it for bit, but we can't stop it. But that doesn't mean all is lost!

The empty tomb of Jesus proves that what His own words said about death are true. He said, *"I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies"* (John 11:25). That's you, and that's me. We shall rise because the One who has conquered death has said so. His Words are faithful and true.³ We must close our eyes in death, just as Jesus did, and fall asleep, only to rise glorious. We must put off the mortal, perishable bodies and rise with immortal and imperishable bodies as St. Paul tells us: *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must clothe itself with what is imperishable, and this dying body must clothe itself with what cannot die"* (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).

These words of Paul bring us back to our victorious Lord sitting on the white horse. He has the power to do as He has promised because our living Hero has all authority on the Day of Judgment.

John writes, ***"¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire and on His head there are many crowns. He has a name written on Him, which no one knows but He Himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a garment that has been dipped in blood, and His name is called "the Word of God." ¹⁴ The armies in heaven, dressed in white and clean fine linen, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ A sharp sword comes out of His mouth,***

¹ John 19:34

² 1 Corinthians 15:6

³ Revelation 21:5

that with it He may strike down the nations. He Himself will rule them with an iron sceptre. He Himself treads the winepress of the furious wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ He has a name written on His garment and on His thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

If you ever had the idea that Jesus was too weak or too soft or too kind to take on tough enemies, then realise that this is the last picture of Jesus that we have in the Bible. True, there are references to the great white throne and Jesus on that throne amidst the beautiful, final picture of heaven, but this is the image God wants on our brain. Why?

The overwhelming power of Jesus is portrayed with the **sharp sword** and the **iron sceptre**, as He carries out the fury of the Father. Notice that **“He is clothed in a garment that has been dipped in blood.”** There are many well-known and much-quoted passages that speak of the great power of the cleansing blood of Christ, and so here too, from these words of John we could consider the blood on the garments of the Rider as the holy precious blood our Saviour has shed for our salvation. However, these words are an obvious reference to a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah in which that prophet saw the Saviour as a victorious warrior returning from a battle against the enemies of Israel. The reference to **“tread[ing] the winepress of the furious wrath of God Almighty”** helps us to understand that this is a very graphic picture of the battle. Isaiah had already been inspired to write about Jesus: *“Why are Your garments like those of one who is treading in the winepress?”* (Isaiah 63:2). The One robed in splendour proclaimed, *“I was treading them in My anger and trampling them in My wrath. Their blood was spattering My garments, and I was staining all My clothing”* (Isaiah 63:3).

Why this anger and judgment? Jesus has shed His innocent blood to wash away the sins of the world and has risen again to demonstrate His power over death. These victories He freely gives to all humanity. He has reconciled the world to Himself.⁴ He has promised that all who believe in God’s gift of His own Son would not perish but have everlasting life.⁵ But what of those who refuse His gracious gifts? Consider what Jesus taught in the parable of the wedding banquet. The one who refused to wear the wedding garment freely given by the King was thrown out. He was bound hand and foot and thrown *“into the outer darkness, where there (is) weeping and gnashing of teeth!”* (Matthew 22:13).

Sure and certain judgment will come to Satan and all the rebellious host of hell. They have worked against the Lord of lords and King of kings. They were the first who rebelled against Him, but all those who have refused His gifts and have mocked the Saviour and His people will also be judged. As the psalmist wrote long ago, those who *“conspire together, against the LORD and against His Anointed One”* will be judged by the One pictured here as sitting on the white horse. He will *“break them with an iron rod”* and *“smash them to pieces like a vessel of pottery”* (Psalm 2:2, 9).

Here in this imagery, we have Easter and Judgment Day holding hands with only an instant between them, yet we know that those who are with the Rider are safe forever.

On earth there are always going to be those who refuse to honour Him. They will be judged. We are also here, but you and I are believers, heirs of heaven, children of God by His grace. One day we too, shall rise from death and join the hosts of heaven in praise of our gracious Lord. In heaven, every voice - angels and humans together - will join in giving praise to the Rider on the white horse who has used His power for us! He has cleansed us with His blood and covered us with His righteousness. To our heavenly Father, we look just like Jesus! See how much He loves us!

At the moment of our death, the fear will be gone. The ugliness will be gone. The guilt and sin from the past are already gone. The hopelessness, the wondering - those last minutes before our souls leave this body will change from thoughts focused on this life *to an inexpressible joy*. The splendid and beautiful land of

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:19

⁵ John 3:16

heaven will explode into view! Our souls will come into the welcome presence of this victorious warrior who is **“King of kings and Lord of lords.”** When He comes again in glory on the clouds of heaven, He will raise us from our graves. We shall have perfect, eternal bodies. Imagine that! There will be love and peace and joy for evermore.

Here’s the picture the Lord gives us at the end of the Bible: *“He will dwell with them, they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death. There will not be any more grief, crying or pain, because the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:3-4).

God is everywhere at all times, but in heaven we shall experience His perfect blessed presence. Jesus prayed that all believers *“may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You. Let them also be in Us”* (John 17:21). While we are on earth, our sins and sorrows make this unity with God less than crystal clear to us, *“for now we see dimly in a mirror but then we shall see face to face”* Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:12). In heaven, however, the unclarity will be gone. Face to face with God, we shall enjoy His company in perfection, all because our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the One who is called **“Faithful and True”** has died and risen again for us. Easter is the final victory. To Him be all glory for ever and ever! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR EASTER SUNDAY

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for Your mercy in raising from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the assurance His resurrection gives us of all our spiritual blessings.

Give us today the radiant joy of the first Easter. Fill our hearts with its glorious good news and precious promises. Make us glad that You have raised Christ, who was delivered because of our offences in order that You might reckon us as righteous before You. We praise You that, because of His resurrection from the dead, You will also raise us, and that death has no more power over us.

Grant us a living faith, free of all doubts, faith that accepts the sure evidence of His resurrection. Give us power to confess our risen Lord Jesus with our mouths. Grant that we may be faithful unto death, and receive the crown of life. Equip us through Christ, our life, who now sits as a human being like us, at Your right hand, with power to live the new life, with our minds on Him, our heavenly treasure.

Guide us by Your Word as we make our way through this world, so that we may walk in Your ways, trust in Your promises, and experience Your richest blessings in this life and the one to come.

Look in mercy on our homes. Fill our families with a sense of Your goodness and providence. Teach them to rejoice especially in the gift of endless life in Your risen Son. Continue to bless our worship of You done in the privacy of our own homes.

Rule the nations of the earth, and lead them to be obedient to You. Direct the lives of all people, that they may fear and love You, and know the risen Lord, who has the words of eternal life.

We pray for Your Church. Grant that everywhere it may have faithful and true shepherds, who proclaim the Gospel with conviction. Give all believers greater confidence because of Jesus’ resurrection.

Grant us a rich measure of Your Spirit, provide us with power, willingness, to do Your will, and the courage and ability to make your Gospel known to others. To Christ be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

EASTER DAY

Acts 10:34-43

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “Now I realise that it is true that God does not show favouritism,³⁵ but that in every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. ³⁶ You know the Word that God has sent to the people of Israel to tell the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what took place throughout Judea. It began in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. ³⁸ It was about Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went around doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the Devil, because God was with Him. ³⁹ We are witnesses of all the things that He did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also executed Him by hanging Him on a tree. ⁴⁰ This man God raised on the third day and caused Him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people but by witnesses whom God had selected beforehand, by us, who ate and drank with Him after He had risen from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that this is the One whom God has appointed to be the judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about Him, that, through His name, everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 3:1-4

¹ Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, search for the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God! ² Keep your minds on things above, not on things on the earth! ³ For you have died, and your lives have been hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your Life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Matthew 28:1-10

¹ After the Sabbath, as Sunday was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, went to the tomb, rolled the stone back and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning and his

clothes were as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel told the women, “Do not be afraid! For I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified. ⁶ He is not here. For He has risen, as He said. Come! See the place where He was lying! ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead. Indeed, He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see Him.’ Be sure! I have told you.”

⁸ The women hurried away from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell His disciples. ⁹ Just then Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!”

They went up to Him, took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.

¹⁰ Then Jesus told them, “Stop being afraid! Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee! There they will see Me.”