

EASTER PEOPLE! ARISE!
Jeremiah 31:1-6; Matthew 28:1-18

Last year a friend shared that as her family drove to church on Easter Sunday morning, she shared the story of Easter with her two small sons. She said, "Today we celebrate the day Jesus came back from the dead!" Immediately her three year old asked, "Will he be at church today?"

All around the world Christ-followers are celebrating that day... The day Christ Jesus overcame death and came back to life. All around the world for centuries Christ-followers have celebrated this day with joy and expressions of belief in Our Risen Lord!

However, there are also skeptics, those who question if the truth of Christ's resurrection. Charles Colson, one-time Watergate criminal, turned founder of Prison Fellowship explains how he responds to those who challenge the truth of the resurrection. He says, "My answer is always that the disciples and the 500 others gave eyewitness accounts of seeing Jesus risen from the tomb." To which I am often asked, "How do you know they are telling the truth? Maybe they were perpetuating the hoax." To which I respond: Watergate involved a conspiracy perpetuated by the closest aides to the president of the United States – the most powerful men in America. But one of them, John Dean, demonstrated the true nature of humanity as he turned state's evidence to save his own skin, and one-by-one over the next two weeks everybody else followed suit, jumping ship to save themselves. The fact is, these people were facing embarrassment and maybe imprisonment, but not one of them was facing the threat of life. But what of the disciples? The disciples of Jesus, powerless men and women, peasants, facing beatings, stoning, execution, yet everyone of them insisted to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead!"

Today, we gather to celebrate the presence of the Risen Christ in the world, because we BELIEVE that God, through Jesus Christ overcame bonds of dead, overcame the sins of the world, saved us from our sins, and insures the promise of life eternal with Jesus Christ. OF COURSE WE CELEBRATE! WHAT a DAY! WHAT a GOD! WHAT a GIFT! WHAT JOY!

We are EASTER PEOPLE! THIS IS OUR DAY! THIS IS THE DAY EASTER PEOPLE ARISE!

Life is not easy. Sometimes life is downright hard and we wonder how we will make it through the darkest of times. However, today as Communion is served, and you hear the words, "Take and eat; this is the body of Christ, broken and shed for you", be reminded that Christ is here, present with you in all his majesty, just as he is present with you in the dark places of life. As Easter People, we are people Risen to life in Christ Jesus. We are people who witness to the presence, the glory, the majesty, and the power of Our Lord! Today I challenge you, as Easter People, to Arise, to go out and witness to the risen Savior so others may know the joy of this day in their lives.