



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father and the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus Christ is raised from the dead! Now that that's happened, oh my God, what's different in your life? He's risen from the dead! We've entered into this new time period where nothing is the same. Everything is new. We have lives that will continue past death. Love is going to go on forever and ever. Our sins are not going to be counted against us with an eternity of sorrow. This life that we're promised will forever conquer the power of death. And when we do die, life is changed, not ended. And now we can take all of our relationships seriously. We can take all those connections seriously because they will last forever. And Jesus is ushering in this new era of hope and love and forgiveness so that your heart can be filled forever with love and joy and peace.

That's like so not what happens, is it? You look at those disciples. I mean, they actually like saw the resurrected Jesus and what do they do? They go fishing. Could it be that we actually do the same thing as well? If we want to acknowledge that we live on the other side of Easter, we live on the other side of the good news, what are some actual concrete ways that we can show the world that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has happened and it's changed everything forever? How do we know and remember ourselves that we are in post-resurrection times? What changes for us permanently because Jesus has been raised from the dead?

So I was wrestling with this. I was looking at all of our lovely New Testament passages. I don't know if you saw, but we snuck in an extra one. We usually have an Old Testament but we flipped it out for more New Testament, because, frankly, you just can't say the good news enough, you can't contain it. So we needed to throw more at you. So we had three New Testament passages. We had one from the book of Acts where we hear what's usually called the conversion of Saul. And then we had this gorgeous revelation passage of the vision of what happened. Where the myriads in the thousands and thousands, they all gathered together and glorified God and sang praises. And then we had the gospel reading where Jesus comes and he feeds them and He says, feed my sheep.

Now, what can we learn from all three of these wonderful passages of how to live in a post-resurrection world that matches the world shattering nothing-is-the-same-ever reality? So on your behalf, I delved into the text and I managed to

kind of peek out four different characteristics of resurrection people. So let's start with the book of Acts. So in there we have that little bit of just desserts for Saul, right? He was going around murdering and threatening people who were "on the way." That's what they used to call Christians. They were people "on the way."

And it says that Saul had the right to take and bind any of them, who he found were following Jesus on the way. And it says men and women, and that sends chills up our spines because that's just fancy speak for saying anybody. Nobody is going to get away with this. Everyone is going to suffer. And that's kind of what's happening today in the Ukraine with children and elderly and everyone in between and all genders, all fleeing for their lives and fighting for their lives. It's painful and it's horrible. And this is what Saul was going to be able to do to the people on the way. And Jesus just stops him dead in his tracks.

I love the way that artists depict this, because it says that Saul fell on the ground. And so they always put them up on a horse so the fall is longer and harder, and sometimes they have that horse falling as well. And it's like this violent experience for this really violent man. And then he can't see, and then he won't eat and drink for three days. And he's told to go to somebody's house and wait for Ananias. And Ananias is this wonderful person who is on the way, just like you and me. Jesus comes to him and says, hey, I want you to go to that guy Saul and like lay hands on him. And Ananias is like, uh, no thank you. I know about this guy. He has power to ruin my life and Jesus says, it's okay. I got this. Just go. It all be great. It's going to change the world.

So this is what I gather from that story. Things that we can learn as post-resurrection people. First, Jesus actually has conversations with us because He's alive. He's been risen from the dead. He is alive and He can talk to us and we can talk to Him. And that's exactly what happens with Ananias. They have this conversation. And so post resurrection people have conversations with Jesus, the Savior of the World, every day, all the time, as many times as you want.

Now I can't emphasize this enough. This is really important. And for some of you, this idea of talking to Jesus is so natural to you. It's a gift, you know how to have deep conversations with the Lord. But for others, it's kind of awkward and it's a little strange. Am I really talking to Jesus or myself? And all of that is very holy. And here's what I have to say about that. In the post-resurrection world, we have the church and the church allows us to lean on one another and one another's gifts. Some of us are gifted and know how to have conversations with Jesus. Others of us are gifted and know how to go talk to people who have conversations with Jesus. And that's what we do because Jesus is talking to us and He can listen to us and we have that gift in post resurrection.

Now, if you are interested in learning how to build your gift of having a conversation with Jesus, there are a couple of tools that you can use. One I would recommend is a book that was written by Sarah Young, and it's called *Jesus Calling*. How many of you heard of *Jesus Calling*? So a couple of you have. It's a book, it's also an app and what's unusual about this is it's a book that covers 365 days. It's a devotion book. And it is written in the first person as if Jesus is talking to you. So I took the excerpt that was meant for today and I have it with me. And I'd like to try a little experiment to see if you can experience Jesus talking to you in this way.

So I'm going to invite you to close your eyes right now. You too, who are online and let's see if we can hear Jesus speaking to us. You are in the path of my choosing. There is no randomness about your life. Most people let moments slip through their fingers, half lived, and they avoid the present by worrying about the future or longing for a better time. But you, you give yourself over to a life of constant communion with me, and you will find that you have less and less time to worry. My spirit will direct your steps and enable you to walk along a path of peace. Amen.

I mean, however that works, whether it was directly or indirectly Jesus calling to you. One of the gifts that we have in a post-resurrection life is that Jesus speaks to us. The creator of the universe wants a real relationship with you. Okay, here are the second characteristics that I got from an Ananias' story. That is post-resurrection people are always and constantly being sent to other people to transform their lives. Ananias is being sent to Saul. Why? To transform his life, to make him see new and differently. What are you doing to transform people's lives?

Now, it doesn't have to be fancy. I myself have very few gifts. I don't know how to play anything. I don't know how to make anything. I don't know how to cook anything. I'm really not very talented at all, but I do have the gift of encouragement. So I go around and I'm sent by Jesus to go and encourage people with abandon. I do it everywhere, anywhere, for any reason, with anybody. How are you using your gifts to transform lives? What are you doing to hear this wonderful gift as a post-resurrection person that you are being sent by Jesus Christ? (Who's been raised from the dead, by the way.)

Now what's interesting about both of these characteristics, the Jesus talking to us and being sent out to do things to transform people's lives. Both of those characteristics exist in the Gospel of John, right? I mean, Jesus is talking to the disciples and He says to Peter, feed my sheep, but there's one other characteristic that was really interesting to me in the Gospel of John. And the key detail is the fish.

Now, how many fish were there? One hundred and fifty-three. Scholars debate on the importance of that number and what does it mean? I'm going to tell you what it means. It means there was a boatload of fish. There were a lot of fish. And you know what that tells me? Post-resurrection, Jesus provides in abundance. Jesus is giving us things in abundance, and we need to remember that. We need to remember that number, 153, anytime that we think that there isn't enough because throughout the centuries, the people of the way, whether they were rich, whether they were poor, whether they were poor in spirit or rich in faith, they always understood that with the risen Christ comes abundance. Look for it and claim it.

Now, I remember a time when we were deep into COVID-tide and it was December, 2020. And I remember we had opened up the church and we had to make sure everyone was socially distant, six feet and people don't socially distance easily. So we made you socially distance when you were in the church by putting in these boxes, y'all remember that? Those big white boxes, they were two feet by two feet by two feet. So we put 1, 2, 3 in a pew so you sat over there. You sat over there, there were six feet between you. And then we put boxes in every other pew. There are 68 pews in this place, we had so many boxes. It was beautiful and insane at the same time. And it was really hard to witness.

And then at some point, if you remember, we had to actually shut down the place. So now we had boxes and no people. And I remember thinking to God, Lord, I really hate this. And I need you to get rid of these boxes. They're depressing me. So there was a parishioner who called Father Bill and said, I have an idea what to do with these boxes. Let's decorate them and we'll charge for people to decorate. We'll charge people \$50 a box to decorate. And if they give us \$50, we'll put a beautiful medallion, a gold medallion that is the cornerstone of our church, which exists outside of the church doors. And we'll take the money and we'll give it to the homeless shelter that is trying to deal with lockdown COVID and homeless people.

So I said to Father Bill, and Father Chris, I said, you know, that's a beautiful idea, but there are over 300 boxes. You guys, we can't do this because it's going to look really bad. There's going to be 50 boxes that have something decorated and the rest of them won't have anything. And it's just going to look awful. Because it's Christmas time, even if people are very generous, we'll get a hundred boxes. That's five grand, but it's still going to look awful. You know what? I forgot that we live in a post-resurrection world. Seventeen thousand dollars and every box had a medallion. God brings abundance. Jesus Christ says, there's more than enough. You live that way because that's what God and Christ has given us.

Now, last one, book of Revelation. Fantastic vision of the myriads and thousands and thousands gathered together. And what are they doing? What are they doing? They're singing. And can I tell you, this brings deep joy to our choir and our music director, Christopher and musician in residence, Joel, because they want us to sing, they want us to sing with our diaphragm. Right? We're supposed to sing robustly and loudly because that's what post-resurrection people do.

Now, if you're like me and you can't sing, it's okay. We're still called to sing as best as we can, but more importantly, we are all called to praise God, because what else can you do when a man who is dead is now alive and says to us, this will happen to all of us one day as well. What else can you do but praise God? Praise God with everything you have, with your voice, with your writing, with your being, with your diaphragm. Praise God.

And this is how we live as post-resurrection people. It's actually really simple. It's not rocket science. Four things. Four things. Jesus wants to have a conversation with you. Go ahead and have it. Enjoy it. Number two, Jesus wants you to help scales fall off of people's eyes. Use your gifts and go where He sends you and transform people's lives. Three, Jesus has given us plenty. Go find the 153 and cast your net to the other side. And four, Jesus delights, absolutely delights in your praise. However you do it. So sing loudly with the choirs of angels because brothers and sisters, we live in a post resurrection world. Jesus has risen from the dead. Hallelujah!