

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 2, Number 4 ♪ April 2007

THEME: Resurrection Worship

Easter Sunday and Every Sunday

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pivotal point in human history and the focal point of the Church's corporate celebrations. As Laurence Stookey points out in his excellent book *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*:

Christians saw in the resurrection profound evidence of the renewal of the first creation, which had become ruined by human rebellion and thus was alienated from the Creator. Easter was the inauguration of a new era. (40)

The resurrection of Christ was the key affirmation of Christ's finished work and God's acceptance of it for the redemption of humanity (Romans 1:1-4). It was also therefore central to the apostolic proclamation of the gospel; there are 22 references to the resurrection in the book of Acts alone (see the "Resurrection Concordance" below).

The Weekly Feast

However, Stookey urges us not to see Easter (much less Christmas) as the primary celebration of the Church. Rather he makes a compelling case that it is *every Sunday* which is the focus of the Christian calendar, as a weekly commemoration of the day of resurrection. Stookey writes:

It is usually taken for granted that because of the appeal of their liturgical celebrations and

due to the general popularity of customs surrounding their observance, Christmas and Easter are the primary feasts of the church. But, in fact, the primary Christian feast must occur weekly, not annually, in order to testify to the way in which the humiliation-exaltation of God in Christ has transformed the totality of human life. (49)

Christ of course rose on a Sunday, and appeared on that day to the women at the tomb (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13), and to the larger group of disciples in the upper room (Luke 24:36), as well as to the disciples again (this time including Thomas) "eight days later" (another Sunday in Jewish reckoning; John 20:26). Acts 20:7 shows believers gathered together on the first day of the week.[†] Stookey comments:

Easter was the inauguration of a new era.

In addition to going to the synagogue on the seventh day, the early Christians assembled to rejoice in the resurrection on the first day of the week. (40)

So in emphasizing weekly Sunday worship as the foundational celebration of the church and the church year, Stookey advocates a realignment of the way we look at Easter:

[†] It is perhaps a sign of the utter secularization of most of Western European society that a number of years ago the first day of the week was officially changed there to Monday (and calendars are now printed that way)!

It has become a maxim of late that “every Sunday is a little Easter.” But it would be more accurate to say that “every Easter is a great Sunday”. . . a time, in effect, to reflect more deeply and with a greater degree of sustained concentration upon what the church affirms weekly about the work of God in our midst. (55)

For as he points out, the Church’s central affirmation has always been that “the Lord is risen and at work among us” (28).

First Day and the Eighth Day

As the pivotal event in history, and therefore in our annual and weekly observances as Christ’s church, the resurrection is a reference point for looking back and looking forward, for **remembrance** and **anticipation**:

On any given Lord’s Day, the worshiping church in the present fleeting moment grasps both the past (by commemorating . . . the Lord’s resurrection and all that served to prepare for it) and the future (by affirming . . . the fulfilled reign of God, the Day of the Lord). Both of these are present to us as we experience the transforming power of the resurrection in our lives and thereby begin to live even now in the ways of the future. All of time is thus bound together in the day of worship itself. (40)

This understanding is confirmed by the way the early church took the Jewish apocalyptic usage of the term “eighth day,” denoting the future age, and applied the concept to Sunday worship. As both the “first day” of the week and the “eighth day,” Sunday looks back to the fulfillment of God’s redemptive promises to a fallen world, and looks ahead to the kingdom, when all will be made new, and to the final summing up of all things in Christ (Ephes 1:10). It shows the continuity and the progression in Christ between the first creation and the new creation. As the first of the regular days of the week, Sunday reminds us that we are indeed “in the world”; yet, as the eighth day, it looks to the future and also reminds us that we are not “of the world”:

Every
Easter
is a
great
Sunday.

In the cosmic newness revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ we find the promise and foretaste of our own transformation. We are privileged to be participants of the divine nature. Therefore the church celebrates the resurrection of Christ and of the whole creation as the center of a weekly cycle, every Lord’s day, and as the center of an annual cycle, every Easter. (38)

Alexander Schmemmann helpfully points out that to see Sunday primarily as a day of rest or a “Christian sabbath” is itself a suspect reinterpretation of Old Testament Sabbath law; he points out

that for the first three centuries of the Church Sunday was usually a regular work day, and Christians would have to gather either early in the morning or late in the evening for worship. (And besides, the Romans did not even follow a seven-day week, that being a Jewish convention.) The focus of Sunday was not on the cessation of activities, but rather a concerted labor of celebration and worship in commemoration of the Lord’s victory over death. (*For the Life of the World*, 50-51).

Time Transformed

So the resurrection of Jesus Christ in time has utterly transformed the way we look at history, at eternity, at the year, at the week, and at every day!

*After the Easter night comes the morning, and then another night and another new day. Time begins again, but it is now filled from “inside” with that unique and truly “eschatological” experience of joy. . . . Time itself is now measured by the rhythm of the end and the beginning, of the end transformed into beginning, of the beginning announcing the fulfillment. (Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 58-9)*

He is alive! He is risen indeed!

A RESURRECTION CONCORDANCE

(New Testament references to Christ's Resurrection
outside of the gospels)

Acts

1:3,22
2:24,31,32
3:15,26
4:2,10,33
5:30
10:40,41
13:30,34,37
17:3,18,32
25:19
26:8,23

Romans

1:4
4:24
6:4,5,9
7:4
8:11,34
10:7,9
14:9

1 Corinthians

6:14
15:4,12-17,20,21

2 Corinthians

4:14
5:15

Galatians

1:1

Ephesians

1:20
2:6

Philippians

3:10

Colossians

2:12
3:1

1 Thessalonians

1:10
4:14

2 Timothy

2:8

1 Peter

1:3,21
3:18

Revelation

1:18

QUOTABLES

The Glory of Easter

“Sometimes I think about how different the world would be had Jesus not resurrected from the dead. Although the disciples would not risk their lives trumpeting a new faith in the streets of Jerusalem, neither would they forget him. They had given three years to Jesus. He may not be the Messiah (not without Easter), but he had impressed them as the wisest teacher ever and had demonstrated powers that no one could explain.

After time, as emotional wounds began to heal, the disciples would seek some way to memorialize Jesus. Perhaps they would collect his sayings in a written form akin to one of our Gospels, though with the more sensational claims excised. Or, along with Jews from that period who were honoring other martyr-prophets, they might build a monument to Jesus’ life. If so, we who live in modern times could still visit that monument and learn about the carpenter/philosopher from Nazareth. We could sift through his sayings, taking or leaving whatever we liked. Worldwide, Jesus would be esteemed in the same way Confucius or Socrates is esteemed.

In many respects I would find an unresurrected Jesus easier to accept. Easter makes him dangerous. Because of Easter I have to listen to his extravagant claims and can no longer pick and choose from his sayings. Moreover, Easter means he must be loose out there somewhere. Like the disciples, I never know where Jesus might turn up, how he might speak to me, what he might ask of me. As Frederick Buechner says, Easter means ‘we can never nail him down, not even if the nails we use are real and the thing we nail him to is a cross.’

Easter puts Jesus’ life in a whole new light. Apart from Easter I would think it a tragedy that Jesus died young after a few short years of ministry. What a waste for him to leave so soon, having affected so few people in such a small part of the world! Yet, viewing that same life through the lens of Easter, I see that was Jesus’ plan all

along. He stayed just long enough to gather around him followers who could carry the message to others. Killing Jesus, says Walter Wink, was like trying to destroy a dandelion seed-head by blowing on it.”

(Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, 225-26)

“Tomorrow we shall celebrate the glorious Resurrection of Christ. I shall be remembering you in the Holy Communion. Away with tears and fears and troubles! United in wedlock with the eternal God head Itself, our nature ascends into the Heaven of Heaven. So it would be impious to call ourselves ‘miserable.’ On the contrary, Man is a creature whom the Angels—were they capable of envy—would envy. Let us lift up our hearts!”

(C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. II*, Letter of March 27, 1948)

“Christ passed through the wall into the upper room, and yet He was able to eat while there. This is a problem for us because it never occurs to us that He passed through the wall because the *wall* was ghostly, and not because Christ’s resurrection body was.”

(Douglas Wilson, *Credenda Agenda* 14/3, 13)

“Apart from the resurrection, Jesus has no more claim upon us than Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Anwar Sadat: He was simply one among many good leaders who managed to meet an unjust death.”

(Laurence Stookey, *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*, 49)

“In the congregation is a man who complains that every time he comes to church, they sing the same two hymns. It’s either *Silent Night* or *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*.”

(Ronald P. Byars, *Christian Worship*, 15)

“At the University of Chicago Divinity School each year, they have what is called ‘Baptist Day’. It is a day when all the Baptists in the area are invited to the school because they want the Baptist dollars to keep coming in. On this day each one is to bring a lunch to be eaten outdoors in a grassy picnic area. Every ‘Baptist Day’ the school would invite one of the greatest minds to lecture in the theological education center.

One year they invited Dr. Paul Tillich. Dr. Tillich spoke for two and one-half hours proving that the resurrection of Jesus was false. He quoted scholar after scholar and book after book. He concluded that since there was no such thing as the historical resurrection, the religious tradition of the church was groundless, emotional mumbo-jumbo, because it was based on a relationship with a risen Jesus, who, in fact, never rose from the dead in any literal sense. He then asked if there were any questions. After about 30 seconds, an old, dark-skinned preacher with a head of short-cropped, woolly white hair stood up in the back of the auditorium.

‘Docta Tillich, I got one question,’ he said as all eyes turned toward him. He reached into his sack lunch and pulled out an apple and began eating it. ‘Docta Tillich ...’ CRUNCH, MUNCH ... ‘My question is a simple question,’ CRUNCH, MUNCH ... ‘Now I ain’t never read them books you read...’ CRUNCH, MUNCH ... ‘and I can’t recite the Scriptures in the original Greek...’ CRUNCH, MUNCH ... ‘I don’t know nothin’ about Niebuhr and Heidegge...’ CRUNCH, MUNCH ... He finished the apple. ‘All I wanna know is: This apple I just ate—was it bitter or sweet?’

Dr. Tillich paused for a moment and answered in exemplary scholarly fashion: ‘I cannot possibly answer that question, for I haven’t tasted your apple.’

The white-haired preacher dropped the core of his apple into his crumpled paper bag, looked up at Dr. Tillich and said calmly, ‘Neither have you tasted my Jesus.’

The 1,000 plus in attendance could not contain themselves. The auditorium erupted with applause and cheers. Dr. Tillich thanked his audience and promptly left the platform.”

[PLEASE NOTE: I have been informed that this is an apocryphal urban myth after all. But after all, fictional stories can still make a good point!]

“Not Friday, the day of His death, but Sunday, the day of His resurrection, was the Lord’s day; and to that day belonged their highest act of worship, when they showed forth His death victoriously in the eucharist, while He Himself, their risen Lord, was present in their midst.”

(William D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship*, 4)

“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart’s greatest celebration. It is the highest note in our songs of triumph, and the loudest echo in our shouts of praise. It takes us to the depths of our heart’s true joys, and causes our hope to climb to new heights. It brings wings to our faith and courage to our souls. It is victory’s banner, and freedom’s proclamation. It is the great Yes to all the promises of God.

At the manger we celebrate why Jesus came for us, at the cross we celebrate what He did for us, and at the empty tomb we celebrate all that He has for us.”

(Roy Lessin)

“The Holy Spirit is the agent whereby the Risen Christ is made present to the church.”

Laurence Hill Stookey, *Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church*, 73)

“The resurrection was a kind of cosmic explosion that reverberated in all directions. It gave the followers of Jesus a new understanding of the present, but also of the past and of the future. Through the resurrection (and that alone) the cross, that instrument of capital punishment by the hated Romans, ceased to be an enigmatic embarrassment and became the central symbol of the faith.”

(Laurence Stookey, *Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church*, 37)

“The church, as the ‘body of Christ’ at worship, is not merely a reminder that he once lived but also a witness to the living presence of the risen Lord. It is a continuation of the life of Christ as he lives in and through the life of his people. The church as a community of the resurrection is the vital, vibrant, and victorious body of the reigning Christ.”

(Franklin M. Segler, *Christian Worship Its Theology and Practice*, 72)

“The eucharist as celebrated in the Church after our Lord had risen from the dead, is not merely, and was never intended to be, a simple re-enactment of the Last Supper. It has been transfigured by the glorious fact of the Resurrection; and the glory of the Lord shines round about it, as in this supreme act of Christian worship men offer to Him an oblation of all possible praise, showing forth His death and victory, rejoicing in His real presence among them, and looking for His coming again to judge the world in righteousness.”

(William Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 15-16)

“O God, who for our redemption gave your only begotten Son to death on the Cross, and by his glorious resurrection has delivered us from

the power of our enemy: Grant that we who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord’s resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit. Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection, empowered and transformed by your grace in and among us.

O Lord, so stir up in your church, indeed in each of us, that Spirit of adoption and reconciliation that is made possible by your grace revealed in Jesus the Christ, that we being renewed in both body and mind, may worship and serve you in sincerity and truth. We pray this in the name of the same Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

(*Book of Common Prayer*)

EASTER PRAISE

Hymn Texts on the Resurrection

Christ has risen from the dead;
By death trampling on death.
And to those in the grave
He has given life!

(Greek Orthodox Easter liturgy)

Light’s glittering morning fills the sky,
heaven thunders out its victor cry;
earth shouts her Easter triumph high,
and groaning hell makes wild reply.

For Christ the Lord, the mighty king,
closes with death and draws its sting;
he tramples down the powers of night,
brings out his ransomed saints to light.

His rocky tomb the threefold guard
of watch and stone and seal had barred,
but now in royal triumph high
he comes from death to victory!

Hell’s gates are broken down at last,
our days of mourning now are past;
‘Weep not,’ an angel voice has said,
‘Jesus is risen from the dead!’

All praise be yours, O risen Lord,
from death to endless life restored;
to Father, Son and Spirit be
all power and praise eternally!

(from the Latin; J. M. Neale [1818—1866];
may be sung to the tune of “All Creatures of
Our God and King [adding Alleluias])

The strife is o’er, the battle done;
The victory of life is won;
The song of triumph has begun: *Alleluia!*

The powers of death have done their worst;
But Christ their legions hath dispersed;
Let shouts of holy joy outburst: *Alleluia!*

The three sad days are quickly sped;
He rises glorious from the dead;
All glory to our risen Head! *Alleluia!*

He closed the yawning gates of hell;
The bars from heaven’s high portals fell;
Let hymns of praise His triumphs tell! *Alleluia!*

Lord, by the stripes which wounded Thee,
From death’s dread sting Thy servants free,
That we may live, and sing to Thee: *Alleluia!*
(12 century Latin; trans. Francis Pott, 1861)

O sons and daughters, let us sing!
The King of Heaven, the glorious King,
Over death today rose triumphing.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

That Easter morn, at break of day,
The faithful women went their way
To seek the tomb where Jesus lay.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

On this most holy day of days
Our hearts and voices, Lord, we raise
To Thee, in jubilee and praise.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

(Francis Tisserand, 15th century; trans. J.M.
Neale, 1851)

Alleluia, alleluia!
Hearts to heaven and voices raise:
sing to God a hymn of gladness,
sing to God a hymn of praise.
He, who on the cross a victim,
for the world's salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of glory,
now is risen from the dead.

Now the iron bars are broken,
Christ from death to life is born,
glorious life, and life immortal,
on this holy Easter morn.
Christ has triumphed, and we conquer
by his mighty enterprise:
we with him to life eternal
by his resurrection rise.

(Christopher Wordsworth, 1862; may be sung
to the tune of "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee")

See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"
See God's salvation plan,
Wrought in love, borne in pain,
paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!
(verse 1 of Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, "See,
What a Morning" [Resurrection Hymn]; © 2003
Kingsway/ Thankyou Music)

Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!
Hail, Thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us;
Thou didst free salvation bring.
Hail, Thou universal Savior,
Who hast borne our sin and shame!
By Thy merits we find favor;
life is given through Thy Name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,
all our sins on Thee were laid;
By almighty love anointed,
Thou hast full atonement made.
Every sin may be forgiven
through the virtue of Thy blood;
Opened is the gate of Heaven,
peace is made 'twixt man and God.

Jesus, hail! enthroned in glory,
there forever to abide;
All the heavenly hosts adore Thee,
seated at Thy Father's side.
There for sinners Thou art pleading;
there Thou dost our place prepare;
Thou for saints art interceding
till in glory they appear.
(John Bakewell [1757] and Martin Madan
[1760])

I know that my Redeemer lives;
what joy this blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head.

He lives triumphant from the grave;
He lives eternally to save;
He lives exalted throned above;
He lives to rule His church in love.

He lives, my kind, wise, constant Friend;
who still will keep me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives I'll sing,
Jesus, my Prophet, Priest and King.

He lives, all glory to His Name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!
(Samuel Medley, 1775)

The head that once was crowned with thorns
is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
the mighty Victor's brow.

The highest place that heav'n affords
belongs to Him by right;
The King of kings, and Lord of lords,
and heav'n's Eternal Light.

The joy of all who dwell above,
The joy of all below,
To whom He manifests His love,
And grants His Name to know.

The cross He bore is life and health,
Though shame and death to Him,
His people's hope, His people's wealth,
Their everlasting theme.
(Thomas Kelly, 1820)

'He is not here.' said the angel,
'He is risen as He said;
For what reason then the living
do you seek among the dead?
He is risen, Christ is risen,
He has risen as He said:
For what reason then the living
do you seek among the dead?'

Jesus gave His life upon the cross.
He suffered, men to save—
Then He broke death's bonds asunder,
and He rose up from the grave;
Offered up Himself for sinners all,
He suffered, men to save--
Then He broke death's bonds asunder,
and He rose up from the grave.

Christ is risen. Christ is risen,
He is risen from the dead;
Christ is risen, now ascended,
Jesus Christ our risen Head!
Where is your victory, O grave,
and O death, where is your sting?
Christ is risen, now ascended,
Jesus Christ our risen Head!

He lives! He lives to die no more!
He lives! He lives forevermore!

Death is swallowed up in victory,
Christ has broken Satan's power.
Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Hallelujah!
Christ is risen from the dead!
Jesus Christ, our risen Head.
Hallelujah to our King! Hallelujah!
(Ron Man; set to music from Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*)

Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands
for our offenses given;
but now at God's right hand he stands,
and brings us life from heaven,
wherefore let us joyful be,
and sing to God right thankfully
loud songs of Alleluia. Alleluia!

It was a strange and dreadful strife
when life and death contended;
the victory remained with life;
the reign of death was ended.
Stripped of power, no more it reigns,
an empty form alone remains;
death's sting is lost forever! Alleluia!

Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
whom God so freely gave us;
he died on the accursed tree—
so strong his love!—to save us.
See, his blood doth mark our door.
Faith points to it; death passes o'er;
and Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!

So let us keep the festival
whereto the Lord invites us;
Christ is himself the joy of all,
the Sun that warms and lights us.
By his grace he doth impart
eternal sunshine to the heart;
the night of sin is ended! Alleluia!

Then let us feast this Easter day
on the true bread of heaven;
the Word of grace hath purged away
the old and wicked leaven.
Christ alone our souls will feed;
he is our meat and drink indeed;
faith lives upon no other. Alleluia!
(Martin Luther, 1524; trans. Richard Massie,
1854)

Jesus lives, and so shall I.
 Death! thy sting is gone forever:
 He, who deigned for me to die,
 Lives, the bands of death to sever.
 He shall raise me with the just;
 Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

Jesus lives and reigns supreme;
 And, his kingdom still remaining
 I shall also be with Him,
 Ever living, ever reigning.
 God has promised; be it must:
 Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

Jesus lives, and God extends
 Grace to each returning sinner;
 Rebels He receives as friends,
 And exalts to highest honor.
 God is True as He is Just;
 Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

Jesus lives, and by His grace,
 Victory o'er my passions giving,
 I will cleanse my heart and ways,
 Ever to His glory living.
 The weak He raises from the dust;
 Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

Jesus lives, and I am sure
 Naught shall e'er from Jesus sever,
 Satan's wiles, and Satan's power,
 Pain or pleasure-- ye shall never!
 Christian armor cannot rust;
 Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

Jesus lives, and death is now
 But my entrance into glory
 Courage! then, my soul, for thou
 Hast a crown of life before thee;
 Thou shalt find thy hopes were just—
 Jesus is the Christian's Trust.
 (Christian F. Gellert, 1757; trans. J.D. Land,
 1826)

Hope is alive, love is now risen,
 Jesus the Christ has conquered the grave!
 Fears are behind, sins are forgiven;
 by God's own Son the power of death has
 died.
 Hope is alive!
 (refrain of Mark Hauth & Lowell Alexander,
 "Hope Is Alive"; © 1990 Meadowgreen Music
 Co.)

This joyful Eastertide,
 Away with sin and sorrow!
 My Love, the Crucified,
 Hath sprung to life this morrow.
*Had Christ, that once was slain,
 Ne'er burst his three-day prison,
 Our faith had been in vain:
 But now hath Christ arisen,
 arisen, arisen, arisen.*

My flesh in hope shall rest,
 And for a season slumber:
 Till trump from east to west
 Shall wake the dead in number.
Had Christ, that once . . .

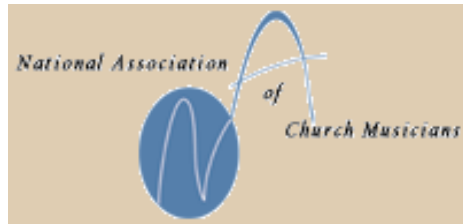
Death's flood hath lost his chill,
 Since Jesus cross'd the river
 Lover of souls, from ill
 My passing soul deliver.
Had Christ, that once . . .
 (George R. Woodward, 1894)

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!
 (refrain of Bill and Gloria Gaither, "Because He
 Lives"; © 1971 Gaither Music Co./ Kingsway
 Music)

WORSHIP EVENTS



[Info](#)



Summer Conference 2007

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[Info](#)

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Ascended to the Father



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