

# Delivering the good news

Jesus crucified and risen for us!



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**G**ospel,” from the Old English, means “good news.” For Christians the gospel is not just any good news, like a sports win or the birth of a child. It’s the good news of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, who gave himself as the gift of forgiveness, new life and salvation for sinners.

The readings for Palm Sunday (also called the Sunday of the Passion) point us to the core of this good news. Jesus was obedient through to death (Philippians 2:8) not for his own sake but for ours. He didn’t give in to the temptation to come down from the cross (Mark 15:29-32) because his purpose was to save us, not himself. As the Nicene Creed succinctly reminds us, Jesus became incarnate, suffered and died “for us and for our salvation.” That’s good news!

For Martin Luther, this gospel core—Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, for us—is the lens through which we should read the entire Scriptures. In his preface to the New Testament letter of James, Luther describes the purpose of the Scriptures as showing us Christ with a sense of urgency, so faith in Christ comes alive in us.

Authentic Christian witness proclaims the cross and resurrection of Jesus as good news for us. The point, Luther writes in “The Freedom of a Christian,” is not that Christ “be Christ”; what’s essential is that he “be Christ for you and me,” that the good news becomes effective in our lives. Or, as I like to say, it’s not really good news until you’ve delivered the goods.

The Easter season is a fitting time to reflect on the urgency of the good news. Our need for grace, forgiveness and healing is urgent, and God the Great Physician responds to our need with equal urgency.

In the resurrection, God shows forth Christ, alive and victorious over death (Acts 10:39-40). Paul provides a growing list of witnesses to the resurrection, as God shows forth Christ again and again (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

One of the themes running throughout the

Easter season is our call to be witnesses, to proclaim to others the good news that we have first received (1 Corinthians 15:1). The angelic young man beside the empty tomb says to the women, “Go and tell” (Mark 16:5-7).

When the risen Jesus appears to his disciples in the upper room, he commissions them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). We who know the urgency of Christ in our lives are called to urge Christ upon others.

The women at the tomb and the disciples in the upper room were initially too afraid to share this witness with others. What about us?

Another theme running through the Easter texts is the concreteness of the good news. Showing forth Christ is tangible, not just words. Jesus overcomes the doubt of Thomas and the other disciples by inviting them to touch his wounds (John 20:24-28; Luke 24:38-41).

The first letter of John begins with the assertion that we—the members of John’s Christian community—bear witness to the word of life we have heard, seen with our eyes and touched with our hands (1 John 1:1). How do we, in our Christian communities today, bear tangible witness to Christ in the lives of others, so that they may see the good news with their own eyes and touch the good news with their hands?

The only word Jesus speaks from the cross in Mark’s and Matthew’s Gospels is “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46). The resurrection is the promise that God did not forsake Jesus and will not forsake us.

But people in our world still cry out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As Christians, how do we show forth Christ? How will we be concrete witnesses to the promise of resurrection amid death and despair? □

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