



“The Risen Christ is Coming”

Bishop Bruce R. Ough’s
2018 Easter message

I am pleased to greet you with the central proclamation of Easter morning and the entire Christian faith: Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed!

Easter Sunday and the entire season of Easter is the story of the risen Christ coming and being with his bewildered and frightened disciples.

Easter is about the resurrected Jesus coming to us.

Could anything be more unexpected? Could anything be more surprising? Could anything be more evocative? Michael Frost in his wonderful little, but profound, book *Surprise the World* reminds us that, “One of the primary acts of the evangelistic believer is the arousal of curiosity among unbelievers, leading to questions and faith sharing.”

God is always yearning for us, seeking us, coming to us, surprising us before we even begin to consider coming to God. This “prevenient grace”—this awakening, arousing grace—solicits our curiosity and opens our hearts to Jesus.

And the risen Christ is serious about coming to us. The gospel tells us: Jesus rolled the gravestone away and spoke to Mary Magdalene in the garden, “Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?”

- He fell in with the men on the road to Emmaus, opening the eyes of their hearts.
- He walked through locked doors, embraced the disciples’ fears and doubts, gave them his peace, and breathed the Holy Spirit on them.
- He ate fish with disciples on the seashore and instructed Peter to “feed my sheep.”

Easter is about Jesus standing among us in every circumstance, in every place—even with you now as you view or read this message. Easter is about Jesus reaching out to us across the great dark abysses of despair, doubt, and death, and saying, “Peace be with you.” Easter is about realizing that our story, our journey, with Jesus is beginning rather than ending. Easter is about God making it irrefutably clear that “God’s dwelling place is here with humankind” (Revelation 21:2-3).

Because the living Christ dwells with us and in us through the Holy Spirit, the victory is assured. We are empowered, no—compelled—as James Harnish concludes in his book, *Make a Difference*, to live the future in the present. Because God in Christ is alive and comes to us and dwells with us, the kingdom is now. Hallelujah!



The great preacher Gardner Taylor says the whole Bible can be summed up this way: “God is out to get back what belongs to God.” That is the Easter message. Easter is about the loving act in which God reaches out to get us back, to get back what belongs to God. And God does it by having the resurrected Jesus come back to us and

- ask us who we are looking for,
- walk with us on the road,
- stand in our midst and let us touch his wounds,
- breathe on us the Holy Spirit, and
- commission us to “feed his sheep.”

Our doubts are turned to belief. Our fear is turned to faith. Our slumbering is turned to passion. Our brokenness is turned to healing ointment. Our confusion is turned to a missional lifestyle. And, we are moved to speak the unflinching assertion of Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” Christ is risen, indeed! Happy Easter to you, your family, and your congregation.