

## This Changed Everything

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*And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourself with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever." 1 Peter 1:17-25 Gospel lesson from Luke 24:13-35*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything. When you have been rescued from a deadly situation or restored to health after a serious illness, usually, there is a new sense of life. There is a deep appreciation that you have been spared. Do you feel that as a Christian? You should. As the writer of Psalm 116 says, "I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy."

You probably know that the human genome has been mapped. We have learned a lot about the design of our genetic code. Your hair color, eye color, and potential for height and intellect were established at conception. That's not all we inherited. We also inherited terrible birth defects such as a sinful nature and a countdown clock. We are born to die. The clock starts clicking right away. The Apostle Peter, in one of our readings for the day, calls our inheritance "perishable seed". It has been that way for the human race ever since Adam fell into sin.

Too often, we fool ourselves about just how good we are. We are quick to repeat the same mistake or evil thought. We are quick to excuse our sins and keep track of others' sins. Relationships crumble all around us. We can't stop illnesses. Take a look around you: there is pointless violence, needless pain, ugly addictions, rampant selfishness, and false gods all around. It's all because of this infection of sin passed down from the first humans on earth.

Don't let any politician deceive you. We might slow it down, but we are never going to stop all crime, cure all diseases, and protect all from violence. We are never going to end death. Unless our Lord returns first, these bodies will fail us. The Apostle Peter quotes Isaiah as saying, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls..."

As distressing as this description is, there is a solution. Peter proclaims that to us with these words, "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (vs. 18-19)

*Ransomed* is a beautiful word for Jesus saving us. Jesus even used this word. He said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." *Ransomed* means "set free," the word that was used for purchasing a slave's freedom. The definition has more to do with us than you think. For we were slaves! We were slaves to sin. We could not free ourselves from it. No amount of gold can do it. Our good works and deeds cannot do it. It requires a holy, much more powerful solution: the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Martin Luther put it joyfully in his

explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles Creed, "I believe that Jesus Christ ...is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death that I may be his own." (Luther's Small Catechism) Luther knew who he was a child of God. If you believe in Jesus as your Savior, you are a child of God also.

And then at Easter, God raised Jesus from the dead. This changed everything. It proved there is life after death. We no longer need to fear our death. It gives us a sure hope for the future. Death has died. As Peter puts it, our souls have been purified. There is a power greater than any power on earth that can help us live out our lives. Then, when this life is finished, we will go to a place where we can live life as God intended it to be. Hopefully, we will again see loved ones who have died in the faith. But until then, we have a mission. We can help others who have no hope with the good news about Jesus Christ.

Our Gospel lesson today also tells us about two travelers on the road to Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. A stranger joined them and they were amazed because he didn't seem to know what had taken place recently. So they told him about this Jesus of Nazareth who was condemned to death and crucified, and that they didn't know what to believe about the report from the women that the tomb was empty and they had seen a vision of angels saying he was alive. This Emmaus account is really one of the most important in the New Testament, for Christ explained to them, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, all the things concerning himself that were in the Scriptures. But the Scriptures were the Old Testament Scriptures, of course, and Jesus showed the vital connecting link between what he had done and what God had predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. Finally, Jesus allowed them to recognize him at the breaking of the bread later in the evening. The travelers said an interesting thing about their interactions with the Lord. They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

The resurrected Christ comes to us also on the road to the new Jerusalem. He seeks to instruct us and guide us with the Word of God. If we are willing to listen to him, he has an effect on our hearts too. He assures us through his Apostle that we "have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." (1 Peter 1:23) And he asks us, whose lives have been changed, to love others and share his Word so that they might be changed also. Amen.