

## Title: “Spoiler Alert: He is Risen”

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John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:1-4

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**Service Readings:** Is 52:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-12, John 1:1-14

*To fully understand Christmas, we must understand Easter: we must understand Christmas within the context of Easter. But to fully understand Easter we must understand Jesus. But to understand Jesus, we must first understand God’s story.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Halleluiah! Like a victory cry for the church, this exclamation rings out every Easter morning across the country, and maybe even the world. The lights shine bright and the music shines even brighter. It is quite a stark contrast to the weeks that lead up to this celebration of Christ’s resurrection. You might ask why I bring this up on this cold Christmas morning. “Isn’t today a day of celebration, you ask? Can’t today stand on its own? Why try and lump Easter into it?” Those are great questions, and the answers are quite simple: To fully understand Christmas, we must understand Easter: we must understand Christmas *within the context* of Easter. But to fully understand Easter we must understand Jesus. But to understand Jesus, we must first understand God’s story.

So, what is God’s story? What is this master narrative that pulls all of this together? It starts in a garden, just after God created. His creation was good, and the man and woman he created were very good. But then they sinned. They no longer placed their trust in God but in themselves. This act of disobedience initiated a chain reaction that reverberates even today. But that day, in that garden, God promised a restoration. He promised a savior, and on that first Christmas morning that is exactly what he sent. John writes:

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God.

**14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth

Only man had the ability to sever the relationship with God but only God had the ability to restore it. And, although we didn’t deserve this mercy, he extended it to us anyway. He sent his one and only son into his creation, a lowly child born of a virgin. This baby child would grow into a man: fully human but also fully God. Not once did Jesus give up or set aside his divinity – he couldn’t if he was to save humanity. He had to remain fully God but he also had to be fully man so that he could hand us his victory. The Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And in perfect obedience and complete willingness, Jesus traveled to the cross where he became sin, our sin, and suffered God's judgment in our place. And after he suffered, after atonement was made for every sin, he breathed his last and gave up his life. But this doesn't end God's story for three days later he was raised from the dead as a sign of victory. But even *that* does not conclude the story! We read from Paul's letter to the Hebrews this morning:

**1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2**but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4**having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Jesus, conqueror of death, victor over sin, resurrected in body, now reigns at the right hand of God the Father. He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Halleluiah! And so, *this* is one reason why we celebrate Christmas! Because God's mercy has manifest itself in the form of a baby! And this baby was born to deliver us from eternal destruction. Jesus is born! He is born, indeed! Halleluiah!

But.... Is that it? Is that the complete narrative? What about us? What is our part? Where do we fit into all of this? It is Christmas so maybe a good analogy might be that of a wrapped present. That one sitting under the tree. The one that is magnificently wrapped, the bow perfectly tied. You can read your name on the tag. You know it's yours. Enclosed in that paper is a gift of unimaginable value, a gift that will change the course of your life for all eternity. Let me ask you this: do you want to be the one to open it, or would you rather the contents simply just be explained to you? The gift is yours either way, but what will bring you more joy? Experiencing the gift yourself or simply having its benefits described to you? Do you want to hear the experience or do you want to be a part of it?

The same question can be asked about God's story. Do you want to hear about it or do you want to experience it? Do you want to be a part of God's master narrative? You can, and you do, when you believe in Jesus Christ. When you do, you don't simply hear the story of the baby in the manger but you experience it. You find yourself there at the manger, looking at the God child that has come into this world to take away your sins. The gifts you bring him are exactly those: your sins. Wrapped in shame and regret, you lay every one of them down at his feet. And you trust that he will place them upon his own shoulders and carry them to the cross for your sake. And you can experience him at his table, when you receive his body and blood and with it the forgiveness of your sins. You see, the story of Christ's earned salvation is not complete without you. The story of Christ's earned salvation is just that - a story, if you don't include yourself in its context. Jesus didn't die so the world could tell a good story - he died for you. He died and rose again because *you* are part of the story! You are intertwined in God's master narrative. *You* are his reason for Christmas.

"Ah," you say! "Now I understand the complete story!" But wait! There's even more. The last page hasn't been turned; the back cover hasn't yet been closed. For Christmas is not only about reflecting *backward* on the life of Christ but also *forward* to his return. His church waits in anticipation for that day when he ushers in a new heaven and earth. On *that* day God will wipe every tear from our eyes. On that day there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. On

that day he will make his dwelling place among us, and he will dwell with us and we will dwell with him for all eternity. Life in the presence of God will be the final chapter but it will be one that never ends.

And *that* is the complete story. It is a story about God's love for his creation, mankind's fall into sin, and God's plan for redemption. It's about his son entering into creation, assuming our sin, accepting our punishment, and rising from the dead. It is about declaring us forgiven on account of his son. And it is about us sharing in that victory. And most of all, it is about the promise of life everlasting with God because.... All because of that little baby lying in the manger.

Jesus is born! He is born, indeed! Halleluiah!

Please pray with me.

O sing of Christ, whose birth made known  
The kindness of the Lord,  
Eternal Word made flesh and bone  
So we could be restored.  
Upon our frail humanity  
God's finger chose to trace  
The fullness of His deity,  
The icon of His grace.

He came to that which was His own,  
But He was not received;  
Yet still through Him God's glory shone,  
And some His name believed.  
To these He gave the right to be  
The heirs of heav'n above,  
Born not of human ancestry,  
But born of God in love.

Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to dwell  
Among us here on earth  
As God with us, Emmanuel,  
To bring this holy birth.  
Though rich, You willingly became  
One with our poverty,  
That we might share Your wealth and name  
For all eternity!

Amen.