

Triumph in the LORD's Majestic Name!

Peace and Life Are Yours!

In the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen King, dearly redeemed believers:

When our children were little, we took them up on the North Shore. So beautiful the Sawtooth Mountains above Grand Marais. Artists try to capture the brilliance of aspen and birch, but there's nothing like the fresh mountain air when the sun bursts through. Once we turned around and there was Peter Cottontail, hopping down the bunny trail singing, "Hippity-hoppity, Easter's on it's way."

Do you believe my story? Maybe the Fall-colors part, but the Easter bunny? That's all most people think of Easter. If everyone believed the prophecies and eyewitnesses, Christians would fill sports stadiums every Easter. But you know why stadiums sell out? Because people believe the tickets are good. They trust the name of the franchise. Witnesses have seen the games! So let's check out some eyewitnesses and soar above those packed seats and raucous fans. This is no Peter Cottontail tale! You need tickets for the big one, but they're already paid for. Past performance does indeed guaranteed future results. Easter is more than myth and legend. **Triumph in the LORD's Majestic Name!**

✠ Peace Is Yours!

If you were the family of that man accused of shooting that Florida teenager, you'd have at least a taste of the tragedy of the cross for Jesus' disciples. Before they gathered behind locked doors, their **Peace** was gone. They had no Easter joy. In spite of all the Old Testament prophecies and Jesus' own predictions, they did not expect Jesus to be crucified and certainly not to rise from the dead. Jesus warned them, but along with Peter they all swore fearless loyalty. Right away in Gethsemane's garden all forsook Jesus and ran away, some to hide, Peter to the high priest's courtyard. There he did deny Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. Nearly every move they made was foretold. Judas' betrayal (Psalm 69:25; 109:8; Acts 1:20), Peter's denials (Mark 14:30), even Jesus' deep dismay that needed angels to attend Him. Remember, angels were created to care for Christians (Hebrews 1:14), which makes them lower than us. But Jesus was humbled below them. This was foretold in our Psalm: *"...the son of man...You made him a little lower than the angels."* (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7,9 quoting the LXX) If someone warns you something bad will happen and it does, wouldn't you at least respect his wisdom and foresight?

The disciples were afraid because it seemed all they had believed about Jesus was a lie. They agreed when Peter confessed Jesus is the Christ of God. Maybe they were cheering too when the children sang their Hosanna's on Palm Sunday. When the Jewish religious leaders demanded Jesus tell the children to be quiet, His disciples heard Him quote Psalm 8: *"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise."* (Matthew 21:16 NIV84) But then the crowds turned on Jesus, shouting, "Crucify him!" He was beaten, then executed. Too scared except for John to stay with Him, now the disciples were terrified the authorities would catch them. They had no **Peace** because they did not believe why God prompted praises from infants and children: *"to silence the foe and the avenger."* (Psalm 8:2 NIV84)

Did you ever wonder why they did not believe the women who said they saw Jesus alive early Easter morning? Luke reports that the women's stories *"seemed to them like nonsense."* (Luke 24:11) This always happens if you doubt God's Word and don't listen to loved ones sharing God's grace. We lose God's **Peace** behind locked doors of doubt and fear. But God keeps calling us out of the darkness into the light of His glorious truth. Jesus is *"the way, the truth and the life."* (John 14:6)

Think back on the last time you were so busy working on something that someone walked in and really startled you. Most of us don't appreciate that kind of surprise. So imagine Jesus' disciples keeping

quiet so no one would find them. Then suddenly – Jesus is standing right there! Didn't come through the door. Didn't climb through a window. Just standing there smiling. You rub your eyes in amazement, your heart pounding out of your chest. Is it really Jesus? I'd be glad to hear Him say, "***Peace be with you!***" Then He shows you: nail marks still in His hands, spear hole right there in His side. Can you feel the **Peace**? "***The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.***" (John 20:20)

Jesus wants that same kind of 20/20 vision for us. He died on the cross and rose again to assure us: "***Peace be with you!***" Do not doubt. Believe with all your heart. The Old Testament prophecies and Jesus' own predictions all came true. Those wounds belong to our risen Lord Jesus. As promised a thousand years before by the Holy Spirit through King David: "***...the son of man...made lower than the angels...[is] now crowned with glory and honor.***" (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7,9) He "***tasted death***" for us all. He wants you to know for sure that your sins are all forgiven. "***Peace be with you!***" You have God's forgiveness – full and free. Trust the wounds of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Peace Is Yours!**

✦ **Life Is Yours!**

Flashback: the clouds cover the sun. Trees don't look so brilliant. Wind picks up. More clouds roll in. Soon you're wondering whether all your hopes and dreams were a childish Easter song. Eventually, Jesus left, just as He did for the Emmaus disciples. Remember that DVD movie where they walked with that stranger who explained God's Word to them? They recognized Jesus when He broke bread, but then He disappeared. They raced back seven miles to Jerusalem and were just telling the other disciples when Jesus stood among them. They heard Jesus too: "***Peace be with you!***"

Our problem is not so much the bright, sunny days. Feelings of **Peace** can slip away when our life is threatened. Cloudy days come when sickness won't heal, when doctors can't help anymore. That's why my cousin's pastor was wondering about her funeral sermon. Rachel had chosen Psalm 103 which says, "***Praise the LORD, O my soul....who...heals all your diseases.***" Rachel's pastor said he asked himself, "Doesn't she know her cancer won't get better?" Later he realized Rachel was way ahead of him. By faith she was looking beyond the veil, already enjoying **Life** eternal!

Life Is Yours! Look at the details from Luke. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write even more convincing proofs. Under other circumstances this would be gross and painful. Jesus said to His disciples, "***Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.***" (Luke 24:38f NIV84) My scarred hands did not heal that fast. Just a finger cut can take weeks. You don't want anyone touching that! Jesus had spikes through both hands or wrists, plus His feet, and the spear hole in His side. Now He's saying, "***Touch me!***"! Sure as He was standing there, His body was whole.

He proved He lives! ***While they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.*** (Luke 24:41-43 NIV84) This was no phantom menace, no Casper the ghost! No food fell on the floor. Jesus' glorified body could eat food, but did not have to. He cannot die again!

In Christ alone you and I find our greatest comfort. **Life Is Yours!** In too many places to count God promised resurrection, not just for believers, but for everyone. Of those who rejected the LORD's Christ, the Holy Spirit warns through Isaiah: "***Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.***" (Isaiah 13:8 NIV84) But for all who put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, praises will pour out of their hearts and mouths. Complete health and healing in glorified bodies like His! Our Psalm 8 says, "***You put everything under his feet.***" (v.6) The same Holy Spirit through Paul promises: "***The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet."***" (1 Corinthians 15:26f NIV84) **See His Cross!** Look at His wounds – all for you. Trust Jesus. **Life Is Yours!** You too shall live with God in heaven to enjoy glorified bodies like His. "***O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***" (Psalm 8:9 NIV84) Amen.