

April 24, 2011  
Easter Sunday

“Hello. Hallelujah!”

Matthew 28:1-10

“Greetings!” That’s the way the English Standard Version of the Bible translates what Jesus says to the women when they are leaving the tomb Easter morning. In the Greek it is *kairēte*; and it is not at all a special greeting. In our common parlance it might be rendered simply as “Hello” or “Good morning” or perhaps in Chicago as “How ya doin?”

It’s hard to imagine. The pivotal event in all of human history has just taken place. Jesus Christ has died on the cross and now risen from the dead! The power of sin, Satan’s might, even the inevitable mastery of death over life; it has all been brought to naught and defeated by the living Jesus Christ the crucified! And what does He say? “Hello.”

It seems almost flippant. All my life I’ve had this somewhat odd sense of humor that delights in freaking people out and messing with their minds a bit. Jesus’ simple greeting is so bizarre it almost makes you think He’s pulling a joke just to see the women’s reaction. Think about it. How would you react if someone you dearly loved who has died suddenly stood in front of you and nonchalantly said, “Hello.” Sure, you’d freak out. But you’d also be expecting a lot more than just, “Hello.” The only additional words Matthew records are Jesus’ directions that the crew of disciples should head up to Galilee to meet Him later.

Now, it’s possible that more was said. People recording an event often abbreviate things for efficiency’s sake. But Matthew chooses to let this very common and not-to-exciting greeting stand alone as the first thing Jesus says. Why? I think it may be a way of alluding to the fact that Jesus shouldn’t have to explain anything. What has happened that first Easter was only what Jesus has been saying was going to happen all along.

Matthew records three specific times Jesus had clearly said something along the lines that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised to life. Who knows how many times Jesus may have brought this up that Matthew didn’t record brevity’s sake? Should anybody be surprised that Jesus did exactly what He said He was going to do?

If I today said that in four weeks I was cutting off my pony tail, then next week said in three weeks I’m cutting of my pony tail, and so on for the next couple weeks, should people be astounded when I come in the final week without the pony tail? No! I simply did what I said. I don’t need to announce my short hair. I just say “Hello!”

But what Jesus in confirming with His “hello” is that when He says He is doing something incredible, it happens. And this is huge. This is not like you or I keeping our word. We promise things that are possible for people to do. But Jesus make promises and keeps them and His promises are to do for us what is impossible for us to do for ourselves. And the fact that He is raised from the dead on Easter just like He said proves that all the things He said He would do shall be done; no question.

This is hugely important, because Jesus did tell some really, really scary truths about sin. *“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” “And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.” “But I will warn*

*you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell.” “Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Don't let anybody tell you that Jesus didn't teach about the condemnation of the law. These are some scary realities that mankind and Jesus' followers had been living with for a long, long time.

But the wondrous truth of the resurrection is that all of the Gospel good news promises of the Old Testament which Jesus echoed in His ministry are confirmed true in Jesus when He rises from the dead and says, "Hello!"

*"All things are possible for one who believes." "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." "Everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

When you and I proclaim, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" we are more than just acknowledging that Jesus has life and breath after dying on the cross. We are proclaiming that it is all true! Jesus does what He says He will do. Jesus has accomplished what He said He would. Death is defeated not only for Jesus, but for all who believe! Sin's condemnation lies powerless. Satan's weapon against us is rendered useless! What was impossible for us flawed and broken sinners—eternal life with our Heavenly Father—is now made a certainty in Christ Jesus.

This "Hello" of Jesus Christ is salvation and it is enduring throughout all time for all who believe. We get this "Hello" in our Holy Baptism in which our old sinful person is drowned and the new righteous person rises with Jesus to greet eternal life. We get this "Hello" in the Lord's Supper in which the risen Christ's very body and blood is taken into ourselves for forgiveness of sins unto everlasting life. Even after the resurrection Jesus made sure that His "Hello" would be boldly proclaimed when He told the disciples, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them"* and gave the Christian church the authority to proclaim sins to be forgiven.

This is the Easter truth we proclaim today and every day. Jesus Christ is more than risen. Jesus Christ is risen and comes to us each and every day. He greets us poor, miserable, dying sinners with a "Hello" which holds within it the promises of sins forgiven, death defeated and a restored and perfect relationship with our Heavenly Father.

React as Mary did to this greeting. Fall down before Jesus in worship. Joyfully receive His "Hello" and welcome His grace into your life. Feel His loving presence daily in prayer and devotion; in remembrance of you baptismal washing. Taste His forgiveness as it greets you in the Holy Supper. Hear His "Hello" in the preaching of His Word of grace.

When you are out and about and someone says "Hello," remember that Christ gave a simple greeting and it confirmed His Word of salvation is true. Hear "Hello" and remember that He is risen. He is risen indeed for you. Hallelujah.