

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 415

The Lord Liveth

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 21st April, 2019 (Easter Sunday)**

Text: *"The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted" (Psalm 18. 46).*

There never was a more glorious statement made than this: "The Lord liveth," especially as we see it fulfilled in the atoning death and then the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a living Saviour.

"The Lord liveth." Now I think it is only fair right at the beginning of this Easter day to ask this question. This is what David said. This was a thousand years before our Lord and Saviour was born, let alone that He had risen again. When David wrote these beautiful words, how much did he really know of his greater Son and His great salvation?

"The Lord liveth." Well, let us be clear: in its immediate setting when David said, "The Lord liveth," what he immediately meant was this: the Lord was always there. In all his troubles and problems and sorrows and difficulties, the Lord was always there. Now that was what he meant immediately when he said, "The Lord liveth." Because this long psalm has a most interesting introduction, that David wrote these words "to the Lord ... in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." David said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," but not now. Saul was dead, but, "the Lord liveth," and because the Lord liveth, David still lived; his life was spared.

It is a beautiful word: "The day that the Lord delivered him" – from all his troubles, all his enemies. That day will come in the experience of every sinner saved by grace. They often wonder if that day ever will come, but it will, that day at last when the great Deliverer has delivered you finally from the hand of all your enemies.

"The Lord liveth." But to come to our question again: how much did David know concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? This is a question we can never definitely answer, but these old patriarchs knew a lot. One thing we can say: in Psalm 16, just two before this, David is speaking a word: "My flesh also shall rest in hope." We read it – it just

seems a normal word, perhaps about David himself. On that wonderful day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and quoted the sixteenth Psalm, and this is what he said: that David, being a prophet, when he spoke those words, he spoke of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. So the sixteenth Psalm tells us, as quoted by Peter, that David by faith, however dimly, did know something of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And if in the sixteenth Psalm he spoke of the resurrection of Jesus, there is no reason for us to doubt that in the eighteenth Psalm he spoke of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. These old patriarchs had a good religion. True it is, they wrote many things concerning their Saviour that they did not altogether understand, but at times they did have some precious glimpses and they died in the sure and certain hope of them.

So leaving David. “The Lord liveth.” And may we see no man here save Jesus only. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus died, but He rose triumphantly from the dead, and He is now glorified in heaven. So the resurrection is a wonderful truth.

Now first of all, and perhaps speaking to our children and our younger friends, *the fact of the resurrection* – it is an established fact. The world may scorn, the world may deny it, but this is settled, not only in the Word of God, but it is settled in human history that there *was* a Man named Jesus and He did die, and He rose again. We have that expression, “Many infallible proofs.”

Yesterday I found in my library a book that was very popular when I was young. It was a book written by a man who thought this was nonsense to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead. He decided to write a book to prove it, but the more he tried to write his book, the more he realised he was mistaken. As a result, he wrote a book on the very opposite: the infallible truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. I do not know whether he was even a godly man, but he was an honest man. Glancing at the book yesterday, his opening chapter was entitled, “The book which refused to be written.”

So there is the solid fact there. All these other religions have their philosophies, have their beliefs, have their prophets, but there is one thing they have not got: *an empty tomb*. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” How often I have quoted that at our baptizing services, and how

often I have quoted it at the open grave of a believer. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

So, “The Lord liveth.” There is the fact of His resurrection. No doubt in reading the Scriptures through and reading them privately, you must have noticed that even the Lord’s apostles were not expecting it to happen. One of the chief arguments against the resurrection was that they were just expecting it. But they were not expecting it. Mary Magdalene was not expecting it. She had come in love to anoint the dead body of her Saviour. The two on the road to Emmaus were not expecting it. Thomas certainly was not – he said it was impossible. He could not believe, but he did. But then you have Peter and John. It seems amazing; the Lord had spoken to them so often about it, but they never seem to have received it. But, “The Lord liveth” – the fact.

But then there is *the doctrine of it*. So many things might be said concerning the doctrine of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There were one or two very important. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the open proof and evidence that everything He ever claimed was true. He said He would die, He said He would rise again, He said He was the Son of God. His resurrection was the proof, and it was His Father’s evidence that He was what He had ever claimed to be. “Declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead.”

“The Lord liveth.” But then the resurrection was the open proof that the work He came to accomplish was completely fulfilled. He cried, “It is finished.”

“Hear the Lord Himself declaring
All performed He came to do;
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,
This is joyful news to you.”

If there had been one sin not atoned for, if there had been anything missing in the Saviour’s atoning death, then He would have remained in the grave. But His resurrection is His Father’s open evidence that He was completely satisfied with all that His beloved Son had accomplished.

We just linger here. What a word that is: “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” I understand in the original Greek it is just one

word: “Finished.” It was the word that was written when a bill was settled, when a debt was paid. “It is finished” – complete atonement.

“The Lord liveth” – His resurrection. It is a foretaste of the glorious resurrection bodily of all His people in the last day. Don’t we read of it: “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.”

“The Lord liveth.” But then *the experience of His resurrection*. All God’s people experience the power of His resurrection when they are born again of the Spirit, and nothing less than the power of His resurrection – quickening a sinner from death unto life. There was that power which was displayed in creation, but never such power as this, when His Father raised Him from the dead. That was two thousand years ago, but the power of His resurrection is the same this morning, and some of you could stand up and testify to it. But isn’t it this that we want to know more of! “The Lord liveth.” Perhaps some of you feel more of the opposite this morning and you feel, “My darkness, my deadness.” You feel, “Darkness, deadness, guilt, and sin.” But, “The Lord liveth.”

“Still to Jesus turn thy eyes –
Israel’s hope and sacrifice.”

“The Lord liveth.” But how the power of His resurrection is known: at times we read it like this, in those remarkable words: “The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.... And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” May we here at Bethel feel something of the power of His resurrection, that divine power attending the Word preached, that power being made known in your hearts.

“The Lord liveth.” Now there is a very beautiful scripture that the Lord Jesus spoke, and if you remember, He spoke it at Bethany to Mary and Martha. It is a well-known scripture. It is a scripture which by tradition for hundreds of years was the opening word read at a burial service. In the old Church of England service, it always started with it: “I am the resurrection, and the life.” I just turn aside. It seems a pity that some of these old, very gracious, well-established traditions – not empty formality, but blessed truths based on Scripture – are being dropped today.

How many a mourning sinner at the grave of someone so dearly loved, now taken from them, felt the comfort of those words: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeest thou this?”

“The Lord liveth.” John Kershaw said, when his godly friends died, when they were one by one taken away, he used to find a blessed resting place in this: “*The Lord liveth.*” I came across this somewhere this week. There was a poor woman. She had much sorrow, but this was her resting place: “The Lord liveth.” Her family heard her say it. She had a lovely little girl. She was heartbroken when she died, but she said, “The Lord liveth.” But sadly this was followed by the death of another of her little children, and she still said it: “The Lord liveth.” But then came the crippling blow. Her dear husband died, and there she was left a widow with one or two of her children, and she could not say it. She was crying, and one of her little children still alive said, “Mummy, is God dead now?” Didn’t that hit her! The Lord still lives. “The Saviour lives no more to die.”

“The Lord liveth.” But that beautiful word: “I am the resurrection, and the life.” There are two things there. They are distinct, though you cannot separate them. The resurrection – now that was something that happened once, and it can never be repeated. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, “Him ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.” “I am the resurrection.” That was once. But He says, “*And the life.*” He is there, ever there, *a living Saviour*. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” And the burden on my heart, beloved friends, is this: that in the preaching today, by faith you might see *the suitability of the living Saviour* – His suitability to do everything for you, His suitability to meet your every need.

“The Lord liveth.” That is a lovely word in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “The power of an endless life.” Of course, it is contrasting our dear Lord Jesus with those high priests of the Old Testament. They died, and the apostle says, He is not made a high priest “after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”

“The Lord liveth.” So we read this morning (John 20) of how dear, sorrowing Mary Magdalene with her heart full of grief sweetly proved that the Lord liveth. I do not think any of us can really contemplate the deep grief and sorrow of those immediate disciples the day after the Lord was crucified. Had they been mistaken? Was He not really the Son of God? Was He not the promised Messiah? Had He failed? He is now dead; He is in the tomb. Is this the end? It was not only the deep, bitter sorrow of losing such a beloved Friend and Master, but if He is dead, if He has gone, if that is the end, what of my hope? What of my sins? What of my salvation? All these things were weighing on Mary Magdalene. She had almost lost her faith; she had almost entirely lost her hope; but she could not lose her love, and that love meant she was the last at the cross and she was the first at the sepulchre, though she did not know that her Saviour was risen, but even His dead body –

“Dying love her heart attracted.
Soon she felt its rising power.”

O what did this word mean to Mary? Those words she spoke – she thought He was the gardener. Of course, in one sense He is the blessed Gardener. But, “Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him,” and she was going to carry Him, and bring Him back – an impossible thing. All she said was, “*Him*.” She did not tell the gardener whom she was speaking about. That one word proved the fact, “The Lord liveth,” in Mary Magdalene’s heart. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” You know what it means, to single somebody out from all the rest of the congregation. “Mary.” “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” All she could do was to say, “Rabboni” – my dearest Master. Mary Magdalene knew this glorious truth, “The Lord liveth.”

Then we read of Thomas – poor, doubting Thomas. He doubted everything. He could not see the possibility of it. It did not seem according to reason. Well, it was not; it was according to grace. But that second week when the Lord Jesus once again appeared, and this time Thomas was there. That is interesting. The week before, he had refused to believe. Why was he there? He could not keep away. Now I am sure that is it with many of the Lord’s people and some of you. You cannot keep away.

This reminds us of that story of a poor woman in Scotland. She was so distressed about her soul. She felt there was no hope for her, and she had gone to all these services and did not seem to get any relief, any help. I think it was one of these communion seasons with one or two of the gracious ministers preaching, and she decided she would go for the last time, and if she did not get anything, she would give it all up. She heard one speak, and another, and she just sank in the depths. It was the last sermon, and the sermon was coming to the end, and the minister said this: “There may be somebody, and you feel you have come to the end, and you are going to give it all up. Well, I have got a word for you.” And didn’t she listen intently! He said, “I have got a word for you: do give it up *if you can*.” Those three words under the power of the Holy Spirit broke the snare.

It was a wonderful word Thomas spoke, but did it perhaps touch the heart of any of you? When the Word of God is read, do these things touch your heart? Thomas said, “My Lord and my God.” Now Thomas surely entered into this word: “The Lord liveth.”

Of course, the two on the road to Emmaus – that did not come in John chapter 20; it comes in Luke chapter 24 – those two on the road to Emmaus: “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.” Then what a sermon the Lord Jesus preached! “He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” I have always said I think that is probably the best sermon that ever was preached, but there were only two in the congregation. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” – the vital necessity for the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And then He made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?” Those two on the road to Emmaus knew this glorious truth: “The Lord liveth.” It was burnt in their hearts.

Do you know what the Lord Jesus once said? It is a profound word: “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Now may that enter into some of your hearts, just those two things, those two simple things: 1. “I live.” 2. “*Because I live*, ye shall live also.”

“The Lord liveth.” And so after His resurrection, “He shewed Himself ... by many infallible proofs,” and then He ascended into heaven. That beautiful word: “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” There you see in heaven, risen, exalted, glorified, He lives for evermore. What a subject this is! He lives there as His people’s Surety. He has undertaken to do everything for them. He cannot give up His suretyship until He has landed them all safe in glory. As the Surety, He paid the price. As the Surety, He was raised from the dead. As the Surety, He lives for ever more, and He lives to bring them safely to heaven.

“The Lord liveth,” as His people’s Advocate. Those of you who perhaps this morning feel sin on your conscience – you wish it was not so. Perhaps you have spoken hastily. Perhaps you have done something you wish you had not. There is fresh-contracted guilt. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “We have an Advocate above,” and He ever lives, and it means this: He speaks on our behalf, when we cannot speak for ourselves.

“We have an Advocate above” – and He ever lives –
“A Friend before the throne of love.”

“The Lord liveth,” as His people’s Friend, a Friend who loveth at all times, a Brother born for adversity. “The Lord liveth,” as that great and glorious High Priest. What does the apostle say of Him? “This Man, because He continueth ever” – He ever liveth – “because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” What does that mean for you and me? He presents this sacrifice on our behalf, the merit of His own blood, and He prays for His people. “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save” – listen! – “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” – now listen again – “seeing *He ever liveth* to make intercession for them.”

“The Lord liveth,” at God’s right hand. He ever lives there to hear and answer His people’s poor prayers. He ever lives there to comfort them in their sorrows. He ever lives there to forgive their sins. He ever lives there as an almighty God and Saviour, to bring them along, to bring them safely through, to land them in heaven at last.

“The Lord liveth.” Now what a theme! But this is the point: may you and I know something – I was going to say, of the suitability of this

beautiful word. No: the suitability of this living Saviour Himself to meet our deepest need.

“The Lord liveth.”

(If the Lord will, the evening sermon on the same text will be published next month.)