*The Lord is my strength and my might; He has become my salvation. There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the Lord does valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has punished me severely, but He did not give me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank You that You have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Psalm 118:14-24

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’s head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then* *the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her: “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them: “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him: “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her: “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Aramaic: “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her: “Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them: ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples: “I have seen the Lord,” and she told them that He had said these things to her*. John 20:1-18

 *A man who attended church service on Easter Sunday become increasingly agitated with pastor’s message. On the way out he approached the Pastor and said: “You really have to do something about your sermons. You speak about the same topic every time I am here.” Well, the preacher responded: “You only come to church on Easter Sunday.”*

Sola Fide - By Faith Alone!

1. Today is the Easter Sunday, but it truly should be called the *“Resurrection Sunday.”* Our modern society however prefers to accept what the religious leaders and the Roman officials believed two thousand years ago: *“He is dead! He is dead indeed!”* In our day and age, people prefer to see Jesus being defeated and His crucifixion as a final solution to His importance. Just as He *“inconvenienced”* the people of His days and especially the corrupt religious leaders, our society, our politicians, and our social system as a whole prefers to see Him the same way, crucified, beaten, buried, and gone. Last year, the Biden White House on Easter Sunday celebrated the “transgender day of visibility,” last week the SNL trying to criticize president Trump mocked and made fun of Jesus, these are the modern day responses to the miracle of Easter. Two thousand years after the events of the Golgotha and the Easter Sunday morning miracle, the modern society prefers to live the life of criticism, mockery, dismay, defeat, and capitulation. If I could understand the disciples of Jesus being dismayed discouraged, afraid, and lost after witnessing His death, I cannot understand or accept our society which would rather embrace brutality, lies, immorality and hatred, over the embracement of the truth and the reality most of the people deep down in their hearts believe. Easter is all about the Resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

2. A while ago I read an account of a supposedly true interaction between a young woman and her professor at the university in Kentucky. Her science professor who leaned heavily into the left, when she asked him what was he doing for Easter break, responded in the Scrooge-like mantra: with *“bah, humbug.”* He said that the Easter story is nothing more but a myth and there is no God so, in no way a person may rise from the dead! When the young women replied: *“Sir, I not only believe in God, I believe in the resurrection,”* he answered by saying: *“you may believe what you wish but the science does not accept the possibility of miracles such as the resurrection.”* To prove his point he reached out to the refrigerator where he kept all his lab experiments, pulled a raw egg, and said: *“I’m going to drop this egg on the floor. Science will prove that gravity will pull it to the floor and egg will break. I give you a challenge though, to say a prayer right now and ask God you believe in to keep this egg from breaking when it hits the floor. If God can break the rules of science then you’ll have proven your point. If not I will have proven my point.”* Then to all his students he said: *“that’s what life and science is about, prove your point!”* The girl stood up and prayed: *“Dear God, I pray that when my professor drops the egg You will prove that You gave us science and make this egg break into a hundred pieces, but I also pray that when the egg does break, my professor will have a heart attack and die.”* This professor stared at the girl, then at the egg, and without a word he carefully put the egg back into the refrigerator and said: *“Class dismissed!”* Apparently this professor was not willing to bet his life based on his claim that God didn’t exist.

3. On Easter Sunday all of us, the believers and the non-believers must answer one important question, either we believe Jesus was indeed risen from the dead, or we don’t. If, as Christians, we have doubts and difficulties to believe in His bodily resurrection, all else that we believe is truly worthless, meaningless, and dead. All of our hopes and dreams are not only shattered, but prove us to be wrong on every level, and instead of worshipping Jesus Christ here and now, we better just go home and carve our Easter turkey, ham, or lamb roast. Those who do not believe in God and who question the divinity and the resurrection of Jesus, even though they might do it sincerely, have already lost anything and everything that has been of any value, and our modern society proves this to be the case. Today, we clearly witness our civilization arriving to the standstill. Our society does not have any more moral, ethical, spiritual, social, or decent values and does not promote them anymore. Today, many people, especially the democratic politicians, do not even know who is a woman or a man. Our society, our media, our politicians, our educators and unfortunately even our religious leaders, do not know what is the truth and what is the lie, what is good or what is wrong, who is honest and who is not, because we do not have any measuring label anymore. *“Anything is permissible,”* that is what the modern society embraces today.

4. And yet, Mary’s accounts in our reading is important for it says: *“He is risen! He is risen indeed.”* What she simply says indicates that in the end everything is going to be all right and our hopes and dreams will be restored, if we embrace Jesus Christ and His resurrection, no matter what our society might say. The disciples might have not understand that Jesus had to die and with His death they became distressed, afraid, and lost, not knowing what to do and I believe Peter and John were exactly of the same mind when they run to the tomb, but I find what John writes not only inspiring but also powerful. In verse 8 he said:  *“the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.”* C.S. Lewis, the author of the *“Chronicles of Narnia,”* the great British scholar, writer, and a devout Christian, as a young man embraced atheism and wanted to prove *“Christianity”* to be wrong and false religion, and wanted to confront his fellow Christian students, but the more he read the Scriptures, the more he studied what the Christians believed, he himself embraced Jesus Christ and Christianity, and became one of the greatest 20th century Christian apologists. He realized that Jesus Christ has risen indeed!

5. Personally, the more TV shows about the Bible, the life of Jesus, the Old Testament stories I watched, the more I begun to question what is the underlying factor for all these shows. The producers of all them, even if many of them included the comments by the modern day theologians, were not intended to familiarize the viewers with the Christian faith but rather to try to dissuade the people from following of Jesus Christ, by using the so called: *“scientific approach.”* What they tried do was to sow the seed of doubt, of fear, of uncertainty in people’s minds, and to turn them away from Christ. In all these productions, faith is irrelevant and only the *“scientific proof*” seems to be important. Yet, in reality, we all need faith, because not everything might be *“tangibly”* understood. We might not have the scientific proof, the *“professor”* in the story I shared with you embraced so loudly, at least not in the form the modern science defines as *“the proof”* in many aspects of human life. On the other hand, we have the reality and the history of what the centuries of having faith, have proven to be true and effective in the creation of our western civilization.

6. The first verse of the Bible says: *“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.”* Modern science tries to ignore these words, and modern science have created so many *“scientific theories”* of the origins of the universe, but in reality there is no definite, tangible proof of any these theories, they are all based on some sort of assumption, but the very same science proves that every assumption is just a guess. I believe what the Bible says, but I do not consider the Bible to be a *“science”* textbook, and I see the Scriptures as revealing the *“idea,”* but not necessarily the *“methodology.”* I accept the words of the Bible based on my faith and the experience of the transformed life through God’s grace. I believe and accept that: *“He is risen,”* but I do not understand the “physical implications and the entire process of Jesus’ resurrection. This is for me a mystery provided by God. I have already shared with you about my experience of witnessing the birth of my sons and how powerful the miracles both of these births were for me. At the same time I have also witnessed the tragedies of many moms losing their babies to the miscarriage and how a great sadness and grief these loses brought to them. Can I tangibly explain either the miracle of the birth or the grief of a loss? I might try and maybe in some intellectual form I might reason about both of these experiences, but in reality I will never be able to do it without believing that what I see is what it really is, because to do so requires emotion and emotion is not a tangible experience.

7. There are many things in life that might be explained with elaborate words, but most of them we may only imagine of what they are, we do not truly know what is behind them. The spring is coming, and I see the birds that nestle in the trees by my house to come back to nest, and they do it over and over again. With the knowledge of the biology I may try to understand why they do it and I may even assume that I know how they do it, but all these are only my assumptions. Something I *“believe”* to be happening, but I do not *“know with certainty.”*  As the species, we, humans, may believe we know the processes and the theories behind our conclusions, but have anyone actually talked to these birds and heard these birds to tell them why and how they do it? Not long ago I listen to the broadcast where the “scientist” introduced the theory that all the living plants communicate with each other in any given ecosystem. I really would like to learn the “plant language” and to understand what they communicate. Unfortunately, only J. R. R. Tolken was able to *“understand”* the language of the Ents and he introduces it in his “Lord of the Rings,” yet even so, he translates it into English. There is a mysterious power behind the creation story, but any and every attempt to truly explain it is and always will be incomplete. Nothing can tangibly explain the mystery of my faith! Yet my faith still allows me to be certain of this: “*He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!”*

8. Easter allows us to contemplate one of the greatest mysteries offered us by God, the mystery of salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection. At Easter we may reflect on what God has done for us, we may even try to explain it, and I know that as a preacher this is what I am supposed to do through my messages, but I also know that there is this great mystery in all of this, and I have to accept this mystery only by faith and by faith alone. Today, we all may embrace this great mystery together once again because of our faith, faith that for some may seem to be irrational, but nevertheless this is our faith, this is what we believe. This is what I believe: *“He Is Risen – He Is Risen Indeed!”*