

# **CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD, Part 2**

## **A CHANGE OF IDENTITY**

### **The Power of the Resurrection**

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Why am I here? It's one of those questions that keeps surfacing.

If I can juggle enough distractions, I can bury it, move it behind the scenes of my life. But it will not go away. It keeps churning, pushing itself forward. It must have an answer. There must be a reason. I must have a purpose.

This is more than a philosophical inquiry. This is a yearning for personal significance.

#### **The Life Cycle**

We first find our significance in our family: mom, dad, and brothers and sisters, perhaps. If the family circle is healthy, we are full; but if not, we are drained and become desperately thirsty for self-worth.

Our world soon broadens and even a healthy family is no longer enough; we need friends. Having friends makes us feel significant. They may be good or they may be bad, but they are all different from "the family circle," so we explore. We find friends with common interests, skills, hobbies. Perhaps those point to our significance.

After a time, most are dissatisfied, even with close friends, and we find ourselves looking for that ONE friend, that soulmate, that lifetime companion. Being especially loved by one person feels significant.

Then the cycle begins again, only now we are the parents, who are bearing and raising the children, for better or for worse. And the longing arises again. Isn't there more than just getting up and going to work? Isn't there more than just raising kids and growing old?

I don't know what sets it off for you — usually a loss or an injury or a failure of some kind, that makes us feel our own inner emptiness or shallowness again.

#### **The Inevitable Search**

Once again, we may try to stuff it or cover it with a new distraction, but we are only delaying the inevitable. It is an unstoppable quest, a persistent yearning, a desperate hunger that will not end until we find the answer to why we are here?

*Why me, Lord?*

*What have I ever done to deserve even one  
of the pleasures I've known?*

*Tell me, Lord,*

*What did I ever do that was worth loving you  
or the kindness You've shown?*

*Lord, help me, Jesus, I've wasted it so.  
Help me, Jesus, I know what I am.  
But now that I know that I've needed You so,  
help me, Jesus; my soul's in Your hands.*  
(Kris Kristofferson)

You are here to discover and enjoy God, your Creator. That's why this church is here: to help you know God and become all that God intended you to be.

## **One Sunday Morning**

How do we know that? Why have we made that our purpose for assembling together? Because of Easter!

I am a preacher today because God raised Jesus from the dead!

This church is alive and active in our community because Jesus is no longer dead; He's alive!

He was killed (it's true); nailed to a cross and hung until He died. Yet, He said:

*John 10:14 I am the good shepherd...<sup>15</sup> So I sacrifice my life for the sheep...<sup>18</sup> No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again.*

Jesus knew why He was here! He came to find and rescue those who are lost — who are separated and distant from God. And He willingly offered His life to build a bridge of faith to bring people back to their Maker.

YOU are here today to hear this story. All of your life has been leading you to this historic moment. Whether you've heard the story before or are hearing it for the very first time, something momentous is to happen here today. It is a "God moment" in your life.

You will never again stumble, if someone should ask you, "Where do you find your identity? Why are you here?"

And deep inside your heart of hearts, that questioning voice will grow less anxious, quieter, as your purpose — God's purpose for creating you and forming you and redeeming you — unfolds.

## **Lord of Lords to Suffering Savior**

In order to build that bridge, the Son of God had to change His identity. This bridge could not be built remotely (from a distance), it had to be built hands-on.

So the eternal Son of God changed His identity. He became one of us. He was born like one of us. He lived like one of us. And He died like one of us.

*Philippians 2:6 Though [Jesus] was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

Jesus walked across the cosmos to venture into our world, to become one of us. He identified with me. He identified with you. We were made in His image, and now the Maker was among us, appearing in our image. And why? So that we could identify with Him.

*John 1:14 The Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*

Many people find God baffling. Not knowing what to make of Him, many dismiss Him. Confused by Him, they ignore Him. Frustrated by Him, they reject Him.

But Jesus — the God-man — invites us to know God. He said:

*John 14:9 Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!*

Does one get to know God by reading about Jesus and studying His words? No more than reading about me and the words I have written would make you my close personal friend.

There is a world of difference between knowing about someone — even knowing a great deal about someone — and knowing that person as a personal friend.

To become friends with someone, you must first meet them, or be introduced to them, and then you must spend time with them.

Reading about Jesus may prepare you to meet Him, but at some point, some crucial point in time, you must be introduced to him by someone else, or you must invite Him to introduce Himself to you.

When you do, you will discover that He identified with you in order to become your Savior, your Forgiver. He suffered and died in your place to erase the judgment for sin that was against you and separated you from God.

He became your Bridge to everlasting life, your Forgiver, and your Connection to God.

## **Suffering Savior to King of Kings**

And then, He rose from the dead. That first Easter morning, as they arrived at His tomb to embalm His lifeless body, they found nothing but the burial cloth He had been wrapped in. Had His body been stolen?

Moments later they had their answer: Jesus appeared to them, healthy and alive. He had conquered the power of death, not only for Himself, but for us also. Our suffering Savior had become the King of kings!

And again, He invited us to identify with Him, not as a mere man, but as a redeemed man, a man born again.

*John 3:5 Jesus [said], "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born [naturally] and [supernaturally].<sup>6</sup> Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.<sup>7</sup> So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'*

This new life that they witnessed in Jesus was the very life He intended to share with them. He calls it "eternal life," or the life eternal.

## The Greater Life

Because He lives, we live also. Eternal life is not just life *after* death, but life that swallows up death.

We are accustomed to seeing life snuffed out by death, like a candle snuffed by lack of oxygen, but Jesus has shown us how death can be swallowed up by life.

Darkness is not some thing; it is the absence of light. When light comes, darkness is swallowed up; it vanishes. Darkness is swallowed up by light.

Death is not some thing; it is the absence of life. When life comes, death is swallowed up; it vanishes. Death is swallowed up by life. This is eternal life.

It begins here and now. Because Jesus rose from the dead. Eternal life is not about floating on clouds while strumming harps. Eternal life is about living above the things that threaten you, that frighten you, that stifle you, that hold you back. These are the things that conceal your purpose and block your sense of significance.

If God could raise Jesus from the dead, He can raise you from your past. He can set you free from longstanding hangups and weaknesses. Day by day, He can give you the courage and strength to say “No” to things that once controlled you, and to say “Yes” to things that you once feared.

You can step into this newness of life today and He will become your shining light. Out of your darkness into His light. Up from your deadness into His life. He will shine on you, so you may shine for Him.

May I introduce you to Him? Shall we invite Him to meet with you right now? Would you listen as I speak to Him, and let my words become the voice of your heart?

Lord Jesus, I have some friends I'd like you to meet... They've been listening to me speak about you and they would like to meet you right now. You came to remove every barrier — outside and inside — that keeps us at a distance from you. You died to forgive their sins and wash their consciences clean. And you rose from the dead to give them the life eternal. As we invite you just now, come into their hearts. Take up residence there. Establish your throne in their hearts, for they have chosen to learn from you and follow you. Help them to know that you are near, not only now, but for all the days of their lives. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

What's going on in your heart right now? Do you sense His presence? His peace? Does your heart feel free? The weight lifted? The darkness gone? The Risen Christ does that!

There is nothing too hard for Him. Nothing shall be impossible for you as you trust Him to help you.

This is not religion once a week, but life. Life with Jesus, every day. His victory will become yours, more and more. And you will grow to trust Him totally. You will praise and worship Him wholeheartedly. And we can help.

Next Sunday, I will speak about the power of the ascension. After His resurrection, Jesus returned to the Father's side in Heaven, not to kick back, but to get to work! He is busy there right now, working for you. I'll tell you all about it next weekend.