

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Our story starts about twenty years after the events described for you in our Gospel text. Paul, a renegade rabbi, was traveling through the Mediterranean spreading the word about another Rabbi, Jesus, who reportedly rose from the dead. Paul went to a synagogue in the Greek city of Thessalonica and preached this Jesus. Paul made converts and made some enemies amongst the Jews. These Jews caused a riot and yelled at the city authorities, shouting, **“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also... and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”**

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” We are in some ways like the opponents of Paul. 3. We have our own ideas of how the world should work. From the time we learned to walk, we have soaked in certain assumptions of how the world works: to do something right, do it yourself, actions have consequences, and you only live once.

To do something right, do it yourself: you eventually learn that mom and dad can't bail you out of every situation. You can't simply wait for someone else to do the work. You have to grab the bull by the horns and do it yourself. Some take it even further and say, we can't even trust a god to rescue us.

Actions have consequences: we see it all around, people who put in the hard work and honest living are the ones enjoying a happy retirement and arms full of grandkids, you reap what you sow, and you have to earn your future.

You only live once: we can mourn the passing of loved ones, but the mantra we soak in day after day is that this life is all there is, dead is dead, and what's best is to make the most of the life that's here now.

That's the way it was in the time of Jesus. To do something right, do it yourself: God helps those who help themselves, He's not going to simply bail you out. Jews in Jesus' time made an elaborate system of rules to make sure they didn't break God's law. While you were waiting for the Messiah, you might as well take salvation into your own hands.

Actions have consequences: for the Jews, yeah, the Romans were a problem, but going along to get along was often the best choice, if you can't beat them, join them. Maybe they'll let you off easy for good behavior.

You only live once: even among God's people, doubts were even being raised as to the resurrection of the dead. An entire camp of Jews called the Sadducees said this life was all there was. And the Romans? There was no resurrection of the dead and death at best was floating listlessly as a spirit in a river.

Do it yourself, actions have consequences, and you only live once. This is the way the world works, it just is, and many people earn the livelihood living by these simple facts. Upton Sinclair wrote, “It is difficult to get a man to understand

something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.” To suggest that this isn’t the way the world works isn’t just impolite, lives and salaries are at stake. That was certainly the case in Jesus’ time. Powerful people had a lot invested in the world working just the way it did: religious leaders, Roman rulers, and the rich and famous of the day.

But Easter really did turn things upside down. 2. Jesus' resurrection turns those expectations on their head. Jesus upset the equilibrium of the day. He talked a lot about a new way of doing things in God’s kingdom. This was a kingdom that was characterized by new starts, forgiveness, and grace. The do it yourself attitude was replaced with a culture of gifts: miraculous healings, a surplus of wine, and seemingly infinite fishes and loaves.

The actions have consequences mindset was reversed with the lowly being exalted. He said that the poor, not the rich were to be admired. The kingdom of God was not of the religious elites, but of children.

You only live once? The widow of Nain, Jairus, and Lazarus might have had something to say about that. If the dead didn’t stay dead, what could you believe anymore?

If one man is standing upside down, it’s easier to take him out of the picture than admit you’re standing on your hands, and that’s just what the religious leaders did to Jesus. Actions have consequences, so they did it themselves, they sent Him to be crucified, and after all, you only live once.

But something funny happened at the tomb that Sunday. You could say it was a seismic shift. **“And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.”** Not only that, but **“And for fear of [the angel] the guards trembled and became like dead men.”** The earth wasn’t the only thing quaking that day, the guards quaked. The dead became alive and the alive became as though dead.

The women approached the tomb with the old way of viewing things, ready to pay respects, ready to view the tomb, but their world was turned upside down at the sight of the angel who proclaims the wonderful message. He is not here, for he is risen!... The two Mary’s later go on to meet Jesus who greets them. They worship at Jesus’ feet, and He tells them to continue on to Galilee to tell His brothers, the disciples.

What I have with me today are a pair of special glasses called invertoscopes. They make your eyesight upside down so down is up and up is down. This is part of the package of a party game which has you try to do different tasks while wearing the goggles.

What scientists discovered is that if someone wears these glasses long enough, the brain corrects the vision and what once appeared upside down appears right side up.

We have been conditioned our whole lives to live by doing it yourself, by actions have consequences, by you only live once, that it seems to be right side up and it seems normal. However, we've been born with these glasses on, and we've been seeing upside down the whole time.

This is the point of Easter. 1. Jesus' resurrection shows us which way is up. Do it yourself, actions have consequences, and you only live once: Jesus' resurrection on Easter turns these things on their head, and more than that, it shows us that they were the ones upside down the whole time.

Do it yourself: Easter was due to the working of the Father and the Spirit to raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus didn't simply pull himself up by His bootstraps. He didn't do it Himself. The Father accepted the Son's sacrifice on the cross by raising Him from the dead.

Easter show us the way things were meant to be. To be a Christian is to be part of a gracious kingdom where everything is already done for you. Just as your place in your family is not earned by works, your place in God's family is not earned by your works, but through Jesus' perfect work on your behalf.

To be certain, there is room for us to care for others and do good works, but it's never us just doing it ourselves, it is the Holy Spirit working in us and through us so that we may not boast because even God's glory belongs to our good works.

Actions have consequences: In the same vein, we don't earn our salvation. Contrary to what the Jews of Jesus' day taught, favor with God wasn't earned through one more rule. If our actions had consequences they deserved, we would be sunk, forever separated from God in the fires of hell for our sins. But Christ took on the punishment for us on the cross, paying the price of those actions, forgiving us, and we see what we get instead: new life, forgiveness, and holiness.

You only live once: this is the revelation of all revelations. We have been accustomed to death just being another part of life, but that's not how things were meant to be. We were meant to live forever. Our lives are not simply 60 or 80 years then it's over.

Jesus' resurrection is a turning upside down, but in actuality it is the restoration of things being put the right way up. The Father raised Jesus from the dead never to die again, and that is the promise for each and every one who believes in Him as their savior.

How many billions of dollars is poured into prolonging life just one more year? Certainly life is a gift to preserve and honor, but knowing that we have eternal life through our resurrection waiting for us, it changes our outlook on life and gives us hope even in the face of death!

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” We are thankful for Jesus and His followers not turning things upside down. **JESUS' RESURRECTION SHOWS US HOW THE WORLD IS MEANT TO BE.**