

In the name of our victorious, risen Savior Jesus Christ, dear friends,

Easter means victory! That is the theme of our service this morning. In your worship folder today you see two images of victory. Perhaps you recognize the one to the left of the sermon theme. It is a famous statue of a Greek goddess. You may not know her name just by looking at her, but you'll know it if I show you this (Nike tennis shoe)! Perhaps the most recognizable logo in all the world, the Nike Swoosh, found on either side of Nike shoes is patterned after the wings of this goddess named Nike, or as the word is pronounced in Greek "Nee-kay". The word means "victory" in Greek.

The Greeks would give credit to this goddess for their victories by saying "*When we go to battle and win, we say it is Nike.*" Her name, "Nike" or "Victory," comes from the very same Greek word that is found in the words of God recorded by the Apostle Paul which are before us on this Easter morning when he says **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Today on this greatest of all Christian holy days, we celebrate a great victory and the VICTORY IS YOURS! Your victory is symbolized not by a statue of stone, but by a stone that was rolled away, exposing empty linen grave clothes and an empty tomb like you see pictured on the right.



**VICTORY IS YOURS!**  
**1. What Is The Victory?**  
**2. How Did You Get It?**



Most certainly you have felt the thrill of victory before. Whether you won the spelling bee or successfully quit smoking or won a golf tournament, an NCAA March Madness pool, or a soccer tournament, or raised your kids well, keeping them alive and out of trouble through high school or college, you have known a victory or two in your lifetime. You can recall the thrill of winning and the satisfaction of victory. You may even have the trophy or the plaque or the medal to remind you of your victory.

Today God tells you that you have another victory. It is unlike any other victory you have ever experienced. What is this victory? Well, the Apostle Paul, in the Great Resurrection Chapter of the Bible, tells us. He says, **Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!**

The victory of yours that God speaks of is a victory over sin and death. Instead of doing a flashback like you and I might do to remember the championship we won or the impossible test that we aced or the graduation of that child we worked so hard to

parent through those difficult years, God gives us a “flash forward”. He has you look into the future to see your victory.

Normally, we know that it is not a good idea to count our chickens before they’ve hatched. The game isn’t over until the final buzzer sounds. The race isn’t over until you’ve actually crossed the finish line. You can’t spend your bonus money until you actually have it in your hands. While lots of things can go wrong in our everyday experience to spoil what we believe will be a victory, that can’t happen with God!

When God makes a promise it is a done deal! The Lord promised Noah that it was going to rain—a lot—and it did. He promised Abraham he would have a son even though he and Sarah were much too old to have children. Turns out God was right. He promised the Israelites victories over their enemies and a Promised Land. It all happened. He made promises to his people throughout the centuries and every single time, God made good on the promises.

He also promised to his people that through the Messiah, there would be a resurrection from the dead. People like Job, who endured great tragedy and hardship, knew God’s promise and confessed his faith in the resurrection saying, **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27)**

Jesus’ friend Martha, who experienced the death of her brother, knew God’s promise and confessed her faith in the resurrection saying **“I know Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (John 11:24)** They were as certain of the truth of the resurrection as if it was already a done deal. You know why? Because it really was that certain. If the God who fulfills every promise said it would happen, it would happen. To have faith in God is to be absolutely certain that his promises will come true.

You know how many and how awful your sins are before God. I have no doubt that when I say “your sins” to you, certain things flash into your mind—maybe even a lot of things. So you know that because of those sins, you and I really deserve the most disastrous defeat on the Last Day. We deserve eternity in hell—separation from God and suffering that goes on forever. A defeat like that is final. In that situation there is no “next season”, no *“next time I’ll do better,”* no second chance.

But thanks be to God! He did not deal us the defeat that he had every right to. Instead he points us to a time off in the not-too-distant future. He gives us a glimpse of what will happen on the final Day of Resurrection, the Great Easter, the Last Day. It will happen all of the sudden, he says, when we are not expecting it. Heavenly trumpets will sound. All the dead will rise from the graves. Those who rejected Jesus as their Savior will indeed be sent to hell—body and soul. That is true. But that is not true for you! **VICTORY IS YOURS!** The Easter truth will be evident to all: **“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”** On that Resurrection Day we will be able to say to death: **“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”** Death and the sin that brings it about will be proved powerless! And because God promises this, that

VICTORY IS YOURS right now! Even though that day has not yet come, it doesn't matter. It WILL come and the VICTORY WILL BE YOURS! Since that is God's promise, the VICTORY IS YOURS even as we speak! You will be with your God and Savior in heaven for all eternity!

---

But HOW DID YOU GET THIS VICTORY? Think about how you have gained your personal victories in life. Your talent made you a successful artist. Your perseverance gave you the victory over your drinking habit. Your hard work got you that trophy. Your dedication got you the reward of retirement. Your talent...your perseverance...your hard work...your dedication. When it comes to your victory over sin and death, those things had nothing to do with it. Really, there was nothing you could do to gain this victory. When you get to heaven one day it will not be you taking credit for it—not at all! Anyone who believes they will get to heaven because of their efforts is sorely mistaken...and will not be accepted by God into heaven!

This is how you got the victory: God had promised a Savior to Adam and Eve when they brought sin into the world and to all people. He had promised a Savior through the prophet Isaiah who told us how Christ would suffer and die. And at just the right time, the faithful God followed through on those promises and sent his one and only Son into the world to save all people from sin and death. Jesus came and lived sinlessly before his Father because we cannot. He suffered at the hands of sinful men. On Good Friday he was put to death on the cross where the final payment for every person's sin was made. His lifeless body was laid to rest on a cold rock shelf in a cold cave of a grave. And on Easter morning as sunlight spilled over the garden...that tomb was empty! Empty not because someone stole the body, but because Jesus rose from death, defeating it. Jesus did what he promised—he rose from death on the third day. Death was powerless to hold our Savior and it is powerless to hold us!

All the credit for our forgiveness before the Holy God and all the credit for the eternal life that we will enjoy goes to Jesus our Savior. He did everything that was necessary: perfect love, perfect life, perfect sacrifice, and a resounding defeat of death. VICTORY IS YOURS because Jesus won the victory and he gave it to you. That's how you got it—it was given to you. It was given to you as a gift from your loving God. He gave you this victory one day a long time ago when the Holy Spirit worked his power in baptism, giving you faith in Christ. He did it some time back when you heard the words of Scripture that told you what Christ had done for you and the Holy Spirit gave you faith to trust that message. Why, it's possible that this victory was given to you in the last 15 minutes as you heard and believed this gospel for the first time. But this is the truth: VICTORY IS YOURS because Christ won it by his resurrection from the dead and he gave that to you. His victory is your victory now!

Dear Christian friends, do not feel that you need to pay God back for all the wrong you have done, Jesus paid for those sins on Good Friday. Do not fear death, Jesus defeated it on Easter. You are now God's holy people by faith in our resurrected Lord and VICTORY IS YOURS! **Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**