Because He Lives

John 14:19: “Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”

 Happy Easter! I really thank God for the heart-moving Easter Bible Conference last weekend. God blessed us from the first day until when we finished with the Holy Communion. As you know, several hours before we started the conference, we heard a thunderstorm and tornado watch. I received a text message from the Samuel Church whether we would continue the conference or not in such stormy weather. I became a little anxious that my Bible students whom I had invited would change their minds and if co-workers from UMKC and Columbia would have difficulty on the road to St. Louis. So, missionary James Lee, Dr. Joseph Park, David Won, and I prayed an emergency prayer for good weather. We prayed that God might scatter the stormy cloud and change the path of the tornado far away from St. Louis. Later, I heard that the tornado touched down on Illinois.

This was just the beginning of a sign of God’s blessing for the conference. God gave his grace upon us from my first opening message, Michael’s heart-touching testimonial message, the testimonies of our second gen, and to the closing message of M. Luke Yang with tears of joy and thanks. Danny and David Lee’s testimonies especially touched our hearts in how we parents must repent and pray even more for our children. Through the heart-moving messages, testimonies, and John’s gospel study, the power of darkness disappeared from our meeting, and the light of his glorious resurrection shone our hearts. Even though we met in-person for the first time after the pandemic, all members looked happy and shared their joy and care for one another. All of those who came to encourage us from outside testified that our conference was soul-touching and beautiful. We really give thanks for their brotherly love and support for our ministry. We render all the glory to God for what he had done for this conference, and I pray that God may continue to bless the coming ISBC 2023 as he blessed our conference. Amen!

 Today is Easter Sunday! On this glorious day I want to study with you based on John 14:19, 1) Why do we celebrate Easter Sunday every year? 2) What does the resurrection of Christ mean to us? 3) How can we celebrate Easter in the proper way?

First, the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. Last Saturday through Michael Lanier’s message we learned the meaning of Jesus’ words, “It is finished.” (t*etelestai*) The Greek word ‘t*etelestai*’ has three main meanings: fulfilled, accomplished, and paid off. By saying ‘*tetelestai*’ Jesus meant that he fulfilled all the prophecies and promises about himself in the Old Testament. Jesus also accomplished the work of salvation through his obedient death on the cross. By shedding his blood on the cross Jesus entered the Most Holy Place by his own blood once for all for our eternal redemption. (He 9:12) By shedding his blood Jesus paid off the price of our sins and terminated the chains of the cursed life caused by Adam’s Fall. The death of Jesus opened the new way for sinners to come to God and get to heaven. Jesus terminated Michael’s dark life in his childhood and started a new life with a bright future. Jesus’ forgiving love touched the hearts of our children to take away the sword of anger and healed their broken hearts by his wounds.

Now I want to talk about why the resurrection of Jesus is a truthful fact with several pieces of evidence. First, Jesus’ prediction. Before Jesus was arrested and suffered, he had predicted his death and resurrection frequently to his disciples so that they might have been prepared. Three times of his prediction are written in the synoptic gospel. “*He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again*.” (Lk 18:32-33) Second, the prophecies about his resurrection. The resurrection of Christ had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:11 says, “*After he suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied*...” Psalm 16:10 says, “*because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay*.” Third, witnesses. There are many witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. All four gospels testify that the women who went to Jesus’ tomb to anoint his body witnessed the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene among them met the Risen Jesus personally. The Risen Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples two times while they were hiding themselves in a room. Apostle Paul said that Jesus appeared before five hundred brothers and sisters at the same time (1 Co 15:6). Paul testified that he himself met the Risen Christ on the way to Damascus. (1 Co 15:8) I am one of the witnesses, too. Fourth, the empty tomb. When the women arrived at the tomb, the tomb was empty. The previous night Pilate sealed the tomb and posted two guards before the tomb. But they ran away when the angel appeared (Mt 28:3,4). The huge and heavy tomb stone was rolled away by the angels and Jesus was risen. When Peter and John entered the tomb, only his burial cloth and strip were left on the spot where Jesus had been laid. As someone claimed, if his body had been stolen by his disciples or taken by animals, his burial clothes could not have remained in the tomb. The empty tomb was the undeniable proof of Jesus’ resurrection. Fifth, the converters. There are numerous converters because of Jesus’ resurrection. Saul was a persecutor and murderer against the church of Christ. But after he met the Risen Jesus, he was converted into the apostle of Christ. He confessed in his letter to the saints in Corinth Church, “*By the grace of God I am what I am.*” (1 Co 15:10) The Risen Jesus changed a sorrowful young man M. Luke Yang, who cried over his sister’s death into a powerful witness of the resurrection of Christ. The Risen Jesus changed my life as I mentioned in my message last week. I believe that the Risen Jesus changed your life, too. This is the reason why we believe in Jesus and celebrate his resurrection.

Second, because I live, you will also live. (Jn 14:19) Now let us think about how the resurrection of Jesus affects our lives. What does his resurrection mean to me? I want to think about this in a timely order, I mean that, his influence in the past, present, and future. By rising from the dead Jesus conquered death. Death is the price of sin, and it had ruled men’s life since Adam’s Fall until Jesus’ resurrection. All men surrendered before the power of death without exception including M. Luke and myself. However, Jesus conquered death and we no longer have the word ‘*death’* in our dictionary, but only ‘*fall asleep*.’ Death gives us fear and sorrow, but because Jesus lives, all fear is gone! Paul was greatly excited with the victory over death and said this, “*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”...”But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Co 15:55,57) Amen!

Since Jesus conquered death, we are no longer slaves under the power of death or sin. We died to sin and lived to God in Christ Jesus. Paul said, “*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*.” (1 Co 15:22) The resurrection of Christ is not only for the past by terminating the curse of Adam, but also even for the present by transforming our lives. As we heard the special message from M. David Won last Saturday in the conference, even though we have been justified through faith in Jesus, we must struggle continually against our sinful nature. We call this, ‘sanctification.’ During this period of sanctification, we must die to our sin to live for Christ and in Christ. It is not easy for all of us to do so. Still, the resurrection of Jesus encourages us to fight a good fight to the end. The resurrection of Christ guarantees our victory over the power of sin. So, Paul said, “*I die every day*!” (1 Co 15:31) He meant that he dies to sin every day and struggles to live with resurrection faith. Not only Paul, but also numerous Christians have experienced victory over the power of sin and death through the resurrection of Christ.

One day Jesus heard that Lazarus, the one he loved, got sick and was dying. When he arrived at his home, the power of death overwhelmed the whole house. Jesus said to Martha, Lazarus’ sister, “*Your brother will rise again*.” But Martha answered, “*I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day*.” But Jesus said to her, *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this*?” (Jn 11:25,26) When Jesus said, “whoever lives by believing in me will never die”, he meant that we will be resurrected today. He meant that we can experience victory over death at present every day. This is why he said, “I am”, not “I was” or “I will be.” When Jesus shouted in loud, ‘*Lazarus, come out*!”, the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. (Jn 11:43,44) I pray that many people in this world may hear Jesus’ voice and come out from their tomb. I believe that whoever hears Jesus’ voice will come out of their tomb and receive new life. Jesus said, “*Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live*.” (Jn 5:25)

The night before he was arrested and suffered, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and said to them, “*Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live*.” (Jn 14:19) The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, especially, the words that they would see him again. Jesus meant his coming resurrection from the dead. Jesus predicted his death and resurrection. At that time Jesus also promised their resurrection, too. Because I live, you will also live. This promise of our own resurrection gives us real hope. This is the living hope for our bright future. “*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow*!” Peter praised this living hope and said this, “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you*.” (1 Pe 1;3-4)

Our life as a pilgrim is not easy. As the Israelites confronted many obstacles in the desert such as hunger, thirst, heat, coldness, danger of animals during their journey to the Promised Land, so too have we confronted many obstacles in our journey such as sickness, financial difficulty, broken relationships, and so on. We are often tempted to give up or drop out. However, the source of power which we can endure and continue is this living hope of our own resurrection. We all will rise again on the last day. Paul said that Jesus became the firstfruit of resurrection for all those who have fallen asleep. (1 Co 15:20) He meant that as Jesus rose again, we will also rise again.

This is the reason why we celebrate the resurrection of Christ every year. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is useless and we are still in our sins. (1 Co 15:17) But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead and became the firstfruit of our resurrection. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain! Amen.

Last Saturday night we moved to the backyard of James Lee’s house and continued the conference with a bonfire. When I saw the burning fire, I remembered the great work of the Holy Spirit which occurred in the hearts of our attendees, especially among 2nd gen. I believe that the fire which flamed in their hearts will keep burning and be delivered to ISBC so that we all may see His Glory again! Amen. I pray that God may anoint all of us as witnesses of Jesus’ glorious resurrection for the whole world! Amen