

Six Words
Luke 24:1-12
Preached April 20, 2025

Not long ago a colleague pointed me to a website called Six-Word Memoirs. Its intention is for people to summarize their life in just six words. Everyone is invited to participate and to share their words on a variety of concerns. It was right up my alley. I have found it fascinating, funny, and moving. Some of the words are touching - "I still make coffee for two." Some are truly painful - "For Sale: baby shoes, never worn." Some are tender - "I think I need a hug." Some are funny - "Life's a lesson. I'm in detention." And some are delightful - "So many puddles. So little time." And then, of course, there are those that are profound. "Not slated for demolition. Life ahead."

Those are some interesting words, aren't they? I wonder just how you might summarize your life in so few words. How would I? And on this Easter Day, it got me thinking- how would we summarize our faith in just six words. Could we do it? Remember - theologians, poets, musicians, and pastors have been at it for 2000 years now. Billions of words have been used to try and explain it. Yet there is one proclamation that says it all, and it is this:

Christ is risen from the dead.

The Bible, this word of God, studied and proclaimed by so many, holds 775, 000 words, in 66 books, by 40 authors, written over 1,600 years, in three major languages and from multiple cultures, and containing multiple theologies. And there are now roughly 2 billion Christians living in the world. Yet all we have to say rests on this:

Christ is risen from the dead.

This proclamation did not start with us, or with the church. No, these are the words that met the women at the garden tomb: "He is not here, he is risen." And those stunned women carried those words from the empty tomb to the other disciples. From that first declaration to today these words have been passed from person to person, from community to community -- in secret, in triumph, in darkness, in celebration.

Christ is risen from the dead.

These six words have taken us from a scattered, broken people who are lost to the largest religion in the world. These six words have found countless individuals whose lives were already dead -- broken by pain and suffering, by sin and darkness -- and given them new life.

Christ is risen from the dead.

These are words that are whispered at death beds and shouted from rooftops, shared at dinner tables, in neighborhoods and workplaces. These are words that have been forbidden by governments, from the time of Jesus to today; and yet somehow, they are still spoken, still shared.

Christ is risen from the dead.

These are the words martyrs have sung as they were being burned at the stake or fed to the lions. These are the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German martyr who opposed the Nazis. These are the words of

Oscar Romero who was gunned down while celebrating the Eucharist in El Salvador. These are the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa and countless others, known and unknown.

Christ is risen from the dead.

These words seem almost too good to be real, too impossible to be true. Like those first male disciples it can seem ‘an idol, ludicrous tale.’ And yet they are true. The first disciples learned its truth in the upper room later that Easter day. Millions of others have learned its truth, not from sermons, but from life itself.

Christ is risen from the dead

How many lives have been transformed, since those first few women went to a grave in deep sorrow and broken hope and came out with joy and courage, faith and power? How many billions of hearts have been “strangely warmed,” as John Wesley said, once they grasped hold of these six words?

Christ is risen from the dead

What impact have these words had on the world? What have been the multitude of ways that forgiveness, joy, reconciliation, self-giving love and service have shaped the world – not just in miracles, but also by inspiring and strengthening men and women to labor for peace and abundance, that the kingdom of God may be found on earth.

Christ is risen from the dead.

This is not some ‘idle tale,’ and it is not just about Jesus. Hidden within those six words is the whole of the promise of God, the promise of life itself. As Jesus himself said “Because I live, you too shall live.’ (John 14:19) And it is not just a far-off hope, but a promise for today. “I have come in order that you might have life— life in all its fullness.” John 10:10

Christ is risen from the dead.

These words hold the power of life; they hold the story of our lives, the story of the life of the world, the story of life itself. It is the story of God, who so loves the world... and how in that love, God has brought power from weakness, hope from despair, life from death. It is, in the end, the only story that there is. A story as high as the heavens, as vast as all time, as profound as life itself.

Christ is risen from the dead.

Six simple words. Six simple words, profound and deep and true. But they only become words of power when they become your words.

Christ is risen from the dead.

How have these six words changed your life? And how are they inviting you into the mystery and promise and joy of everlasting life?

*Alleluia. Christ is risen from the dead.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.*

Amen