

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 (NIV)

⁵⁴When 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.” ⁵⁵“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

46-15-06-A Holiday Takes Death

Easter, resurrection, death, victory

1 Cor 15:54-57

Easter is the holiday that takes the sting out of death.

INTRODUCTION: (text as the Scripture reading)

–[*Death Takes a Holiday*, was a 1934 movie about *Death taking a human form* to see what human life was like and falling in love with a beautiful woman.] “*A Holiday Takes Death*” (title) is the true story of the *King of Life* becoming a human being to seek and save His bride-to-be from bondage to death. We’re that Bride—the Church God’s Son died to liberate. At Easter, we celebrate His Resurrection’s victory over the grave. **HOM.idea.**
–*Christmas may seem more popular than Easter, but...*

I. Easter is the Central Holiday of Christianity

A. It’s the Sunday from which all other Sunday worship comes.

1. After Christ’s Resurrection on Sunday the early church started meeting on Sundays to commemorate His victory. [It was a big switch for Jews to move 7th-day Sabbath meetings to Sunday, the 1st day; it demonstrated the intensity of what happened that very 1st Easter Sunday.]
2. A Sabbath day of rest marked the end of work. (Sundays mark a new beginning of work: *Christ’s resurrection life working in us!*)

B. Holidays or holy days [days set apart] memorialize great events, but our minds can get distracted. [When Greece defeated Persia at the Battle of Marathon, a herald named Pheidippides ran 25 miles to Athens with a one-word message: “Victory!” His 25-mile run became the basis of marathon races. One year, *The Saturday Review* had a cartoon with Pheidippides reaching Athens but only able to tell everyone, “I forgot the message.”]

TRANS: We must not forget our message. We too are *heralds*, running a lifelong *marathon* with the message of Christ’s “Victory!” Let’s keep that hopeful message fresh in our minds by remembering that *Sunday* is the weekday of that 1st victorious Easter, when Christ took the sting out of death. Yet, each year, this special holiday of...

II. Easter is Celebrated in a World Full of Worries– v.54, *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.” [“perishable” and “mortal” are 2 big areas of worry.]

- A. This is an anxious age, worried about viral epidemics, economic crashes, corrupt politics, tragic shootings, global war & terrorism. [One Easter morning, we had a bomb threat across the street from Eskaton!]
- B. But causes for worry make up just one side of the tension seen in “the perishable” vs. “the imperishable” or “the mortal” vs. “immortality.”
1. God put in us a longing for “the imperishable” [When buying things, we ask, “How long’s it last? Is it guaranteed?”] (What leads to anxieties, worries, even to despair and pessimism, is that we already know for certain that everything finally will wear out, including us.)
 2. Nothing erases the longing— Eccl 3:11b, He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (But while longing for “eternity,” we see unfulfilled plans and unfinished projects finally fading through decay and death.)

TRANS: [Old bumper sticker: “Life’s a bitch, then you die!”—a crass, unpleasant statement by those watching this inevitable disintegration and becoming pessimists. It would be even more unpleasant if it was true, but it’s not!] Ours are better words with happier news: “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” Jesus cancels pessimism! **Easter is the holiday that disintegrates worries from the Christian believer’s life.** Why? Because it takes the sting out of death.

III. **Easter Celebrates Death’s Defeat**— v.55, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

- A. That longed-for “eternity” is now ours through “eternal life”— John 3:16, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (Our “eternal life” is in the King of Life, our Bridegroom, Who left “eternity” to enter time, in order to rescue us, His Bride, from “the sting of death.”)
- B. When God’s Life in human flesh died saying, “It is finished,” death met defeat. (The night before in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to finish off death, by telling His Father, “Not my will, but Yours be done.”)
1. [As a person nears death, people say, “It’s close now... It will soon be over.” But Christ’s choice to face the Cross lets us proclaim, “No! It’s not ending! It’s just beginning!”] Christ’s victory enables us to scoff at death— v.55, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”
 2. [Easter allows us to face death as a caterpillar faces the cocoon. It spins it as a coffin, to rest in peace until its transformation into a beautiful butterfly.]
 3. Death met defeat when Christ defeated the “power” behind death— v.56, The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

- a. God’s law was a boundary line separating life from death (Sin put us on the wrong side of that line and under death’s power.)
 - b. When we cross that line, sin becomes our boss, paying us with the currency of death— Rom 6:23a, For the wages of sin is death...
 - c. Jesus took our “wages of sin,” replacing them with new currency — Rom 6:23b, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- C. Easter is the Christian’s original Thanksgiving Day— v.57, But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (We recall that “victory” weekly on Sundays, yearly at Easter, and every time we take Holy Communion [Eucharist=“thanksgiving”], because, at His Table, we swallow the life of Him Who “swallowed up” death for us.)

CONCLUSION:

—**Easter is the holiday that takes the sting out of death.** It connects our inborn longing for “eternity” with the living reality of His life-giving Resurrection. We connect with that reality by faith— Rom 10:9, ...if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Then, when hearing, “Christ is risen!” we respond together by saying what? “He is risen indeed!”