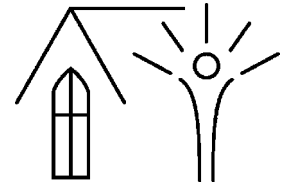




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Our Mission Statement:

*“To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ”*

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“The Number One Greatest Comeback of All Time”

John 20:1-9

Reverend Thomas Kim

Dr. John Trent tells about a wedding video he once saw. The video was shot from the back of the church looking up the aisle toward the bride and groom. Because of the camera angle, you could see several members of the congregation. Suddenly, during the vows, a man jumped up from his pew and yelled, “Yes, Yes, Yes!” as he pumped his fist. Then he froze and slid down into his seat—and sheepishly took off his headphones. It turned out he had been listening to the Auburn-Alabama football game, and his favorite team had just scored. (John Trent, “How To Give Your Kids...” *Christian Parenting Today*, Sept/Oct 1999)

When your team is behind the rival team, and you have given up on the game in the last quarter of the game as you are ready to leave the stadium, all of sudden your team start to comeback, you stand up, pump your fist, and say “Yes, Yes, Yes.” Easter is a day for Christians to pump their fist in the air and say, “Yes, Yes, Yes.” Yes is what Easter is about. God’s yes to the victory over death, love over hate, faith over fear, hope over despair. Everything about Easter says, “Yes, Yes, Yes!”

Probably the biggest surprise in the history of presidential elections, Harry Truman defied the odds in winning re-election in 1948. When the campaign started, no one except Truman himself expected he would win. The New York Times announced that "Thomas E. Dewey's election as President is a foregone conclusion." The Kiplinger Newsletter declared that "Dewey will be in for eight years - until '57." Just before the election, Life Magazine carried a large picture of Dewey with the caption, "The next President of the United States." Changing Times Magazine, a new weekly, was "WHAT DEWEY WILL DO."

Just before the election, Gallup gave the election to Dewey by 49.5% to 44.5%. Roper gave Dewey 52.2% to 37.1% for Truman. However, when the election was over, Truman had beaten Dewey by more than two million votes. On the way back to Washington, Truman stopped in St. Louis and held up a copy of the Chicago Tribune (published too early) announcing in a big headline, "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN." (http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/presidents_and_first_ladies/29362)

Harry Truman made a great comeback.

Do you know we are part of the greatest comeback of all time? For in Romans 6:5 Paul said, “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

In The November 2001 issue of Sports Illustrated, the editors put together of a top ten list of the greatest comebacks of all time since the 2001 World Series was so dramatic. The Arizona Diamondbacks came back to beat the New York Yankees in the last inning of the last game.

The list was broader than just sports. Elvis Presley made it as a result of a TV special in 1968 that revived his sagging career. Muhammad Ali made the list for his comeback from a seven year forced exile from boxing to once again become the undisputed heavy weight champion of the world. Michael Jordan made the list because he returned from baseball to basketball and won another three championships. Harry Truman was on the list as well.

Number two among the all time comebacks was a tie between Germany and Japan for coming back from being devastated by WWII to become economic powers within only a generation. And the number one greatest comeback of all time according to Sports Illustrated –Jesus Christ, A.D. 33.

Now I don't know if one of the editors was a Christian and was trying to make a point or if Jesus' listing was purely in jest, but regardless of the editors motivations they certainly got that one right. Jesus Christ's comeback from death to life was the greatest comeback of all time. And unlike all of the other comebacks that made the top ten list, this is one comeback that we can get in on as well. We are to be part of the number one greatest comeback of all time.

Garbage truck driver Craig Randall sometimes brings his work home with him. There was that old-fashioned sewing machine he salvaged. There were some books he lifted from the trash. And then there was that Wendy's soft-drink cup that just happened to be worth \$200,000. Neither Randall nor his fiancée believed it until Randall drove his garbage truck to a Wendy's restaurant and picked up his check.

"I will probably still tell him not to bring stuff home from the trash," said his fiancée, Michelle Dacey. Randall said he lifted the cup off a pile of trash— he can't remember what day, exactly— while on his route in the Boston suburb of Dedham. After all, he had peeled another contest sticker from another cup earlier. He won a prize with that one, too. "I won a chicken sandwich the week before, and I figured, hey, I'd get some fries to go with it," he said. This time, however, the ticket said: "Congratulations. You have won \$200,000 toward a new home." (LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER, October 27, 1996, p. A8)

I am not promoting gambling here, but saying that we are like the thrown away Wendy's soft-drink cup, a treasure lifted from the garbage heap. An appropriate story for this day. After all, it was from a garbage heap of humanity that our salvation was lifted, from the terrible crucifixion on Good Friday to the joy of eternal life through the resurrection of the Lord.

So don't throw away God's gift of life, and don't reject God's invitation to a resurrected life. When we reject God's gift of Easter we are missing out on much more than we might think!

Moses committed murder and fled from Egypt in fear only to comeback and lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. David committed adultery and murder only to comeback and become the greatest king in Israel history. Peter denied with oaths and curses that he even knew Jesus only to comeback and become the pillar and leader of the early church. Paul persecuted Christians only to comeback and become the apostle of Christ, and spread the Gospel through out the world, write the most of the New Testament, but remember Judas didn't. The biggest mistake Judas made I think is he gave up on himself! Judas killed himself because he did not know that Easter was coming in only three days. Had he known that maybe he would have waited, maybe he would have hung on a little bit longer and maybe the outcome would have been gloriously different? But he didn't.

If you are feeling that you are at the end of your rope and you feel like throwing in the towel-don't! With God things can change unexpectedly and dramatically for the good. Your situation might seem hopeless, but Jesus Christ specializes in hopeless cases.

However, please stay with me for a moment, and let me just say here that the teachings of Jesus are the most beautiful and important teachings that humanity has ever received. We are still trying to understand the full import of them, but they are not enough.

I dare say that even the cross is not enough. Peter was still a reed, not a rock after the crucifixion. Judas had walked with Jesus and talked with him daily, but still he betrayed him, and hung himself. The others fled and deserted Jesus in the face of impending danger.

There are those who want to see Jesus only as a great teacher, but it is not enough. Others want to elevate him as the perfect role model. He was, but that is not enough. Others want us to see Jesus die on the cross and say that is the kind of courage and sacrificial love we need in the world today. It is, but it is not enough. If the story of Jesus had ended with his life, teachings, passion, and death on the cross, it is clear that his disciples would have gone back to their previous occupations and Jesus would have long ago been forgotten.

It is the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ that is, the number one greatest comeback of all time. And today, God invites us to join in the joy and celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord. God says, we also can experience our own comeback like the comeback of Jesus Christ in our own life. For in Romans 6:5 Paul said, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

And so this the sum of it: Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on that first Easter morning we have the promise of pardon for our past sins, peace and power for our present living and paradise for our future. Therefore, don't miss out on God's offer—the comeback—of a lifetime.

Christians see resurrection as a fact. Fact: God raised Jesus from death. Fact: God will raise those in Christ from death as well.

Resurrection is a fact, but it is more than a fact. That fact introduces us to the resurrection power which raised Jesus' dead body. That power functions in the resurrection people.

You see, Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for sins committed, but not for his own sins. Rather he died to pay for the sins of the world—your sins and mine. He did this so that we wouldn't have to get what we deserve—that's called Grace. We don't do anything to deserve it, but by the grace of God, which we access through our faith, we receive the forgiveness of sins.

And you and I are to comeback. Easter is the greatest comeback of all time, but God gives us Easter not for God's own glory but for you and me to make the greatest comeback of all time ours.

Hallelujah !

Amen.