

Resurrection and the Divine Principle

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Thank you very much and Happy Easter. When I went to Russia, about 24 years ago, just after the end of Communism and the beginning of the end of the dark winter of the Russian people, I had an opportunity to teach about the Divine Principle there and share the good news that God's kingdom is coming to the earth.

In the three months before I went to Russia, I decided I better learn some Russian. Great plan, right? (Laughter) But UTS did not have a class in Russian. Fortunately, our local community college did, so I, with a number of other soon-to-be missionaries, went down twice a week to learn Russian.

Our Russian teacher was very much old-school, from the Marxist Leninist tradition. I remember the very first word we learned was “работать (rabotat’)” which means “to work”. We went on from there to learn all the good, piety words.

When I got to Russia, I found that these were not so useful anymore. The first word of Russian that I learned in Russia was at my first Sunday Service, near Moscow, and that was the word for Sunday which is “Воскресенье (Voskresen'ye)”, which also means “resurrection”. I thought this was interesting. Here is a country that has been atheist, officially, for 70 years, but in this country they have resurrection once a week. Every Sunday is resurrection day. According to the Divine Principle, actually, every Sunday, every Monday, every day of the week should be the day of resurrection.

The Real Meaning of Death

As we think about Jesus today, and what it really meant that he rose from the dead and continued his mission, I would like to start by thinking a little bit about what we learned from the Divine Principle about the meaning of resurrection. There are two types of death that took place in human history. At the time of the Fall, many people thought that death was the reality that our life would end; we'd be buried, and that life would be over. God said to Adam and Eve, “The day you eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—”, what will happen? “You'll surely die.” As a matter of fact, they surely didn't die. At least as far as we could see, because they went on, they had children, and they lived a long time. Back in those days, I don't know quite how it worked, but the Bible records people living to incredible ages.

There are definitely a lot of people who think that the gradual shortening of human life, and the fact that now we only have 70-100 years, is the death that's implied by the Fall of man. The Divine Principle makes it quite clear that this is not the case. The real meaning of death is that we lost the ability to receive and know the love of God. If you think about ourselves, think about our world out here, how different it would be if everyone of us, every day, from the moment we woke up to the moment we slept, was convinced and living in the presence of the overwhelming love of God. How differently we would treat each other. How different the world would be. Right now, we have people killing each other in the name of God. We have religious wars. We have ethnic wars. We have people praying to God for victory on opposite sides hoping that God will help them destroy their God-fearing enemy. It's ridiculous. This spiritual death is the one that Jesus came to restore.



Resurrection is Forever

I want to read you a phrase from True Father speaking about resurrection and Easter. This is from Easter Sunday, 1957:

“The day of resurrection is the day that God has been longing for from the moment of the human Fall up to the time of Jesus’s coming and from Jesus’s coming until today. The Jewish people, as well as the whole of humanity and all things, long for the one day that we can be liberated from the fall and resurrected; in other words, the day of resurrection. To put it another way, God has been yearning for the day of substantial resurrection, the day of love, for 4,000 years until the time of Jesus. And He wanted to usher in the day of substantial, permanent resurrection.”

That's another concept that I want to think about with you this morning. Resurrection, if it's to be truly meaningful, it has to be permanent. We don't need the kind of resurrection where we feel good today on Easter Sunday and then tomorrow on Easter Monday we already feel ourselves sliding away from the grace of God. We don't want to live a life dedicated to God for 10, 20, 30, 40 years and then find in our final days we're not so sure anymore, and we begin to feel doubt and weakness.

We want the type of resurrection that builds from day-to-day, from year-to-year, so that all the time we're feeling closer to God, our Heavenly Parent. We feel absolutely secure and solid that nothing, nothing at all, can ever take it away. We don't want the type of religious experience that flares up for a moment and then leaves us still empty and hollow.

Walking with Faith

Today is Easter Sunday. There are three Easter Sundays that I want to talk to you about. The first one, of course, is the first Easter Sunday. I'd like you to think for a moment about those last hours of Jesus on the cross and the things that he cried out to God. One thing that really sticks out in my heart, burns actually, is Jesus's impassioned plea, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Through history, people have wondered, how could Jesus say that? Did he really feel forsaken by God in that moment? For those who believe that Jesus and God are one and the same, it doesn't even begin to make sense. The Divine Principle explains that in that moment Jesus was carrying on his shoulder the whole anguish of human history; of all those who had felt separation from God and had felt the emptiness that comes when we don't know or feel God closely.

Let me ask you, did he say that simply symbolically to fulfill a condition, or would it be that in that

moment he felt the entire emptiness and loneliness of, not only our separation from God, but God's separation from us? I think it was the most genuine and deep feeling of the heart, that in that moment, Jesus was tasting it all.

Let me ask you another question, in that moment, do you think Jesus knew that Sunday morning he'd be stepping out of the grave resurrected, or not? I think both answers are correct. I think that on the one hand, of course, Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." He had talked about himself with complete confidence as the son of the living God. He called God, "daddy". That's what *aba* means in Hebrew.

At the same time, he was a man in many ways like you and me, and as the darkness began to close in on that Good Friday, I'm absolutely sure that he was walking with faith. He didn't know exactly what would happen three days later.

According to some scriptures, what did Jesus do on Easter Saturday? In the Gospel of Peter, or the letter of Peter, it says he took a day trip to Hell. Did you know about that? He went down to Hell, and who did he witness to? He talked to people who had been drowned at the time of Noah. Not a lot of folk know that story. Jesus, in those three days, in the ground, took the time to share with people who had never known him in life, who had no opportunity. After that, on Sunday, of course, is the story that we know well of Jesus coming out and walking again.

The Process of Resurrection

Do you think Jesus's resurrection was finished on that day? I don't. I think, actually, it took some time. The first thing was the first Easter Sunday, as he stepped out from death to life. But then, the scriptures tell us it took 40 days of working with his fractured and divided disciples to, first of all, persuade them that he'd been brought back to life. Some of them didn't believe it. St. Thomas said, "No, I'm not going to believe it till I see him and put my hands in the wounds on his side." He wasn't the only one who had his doubts. The scriptures say that that same Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to two of his disciples walking on the road to a nearby village, and they didn't recognize him, or know him.

I think about our movement today, still grieving 3 ½ years after our True Father's passing. Do we believe completely that, yes, he lives? He is risen, and he is with us? Or are we like those disciples still hoping, if not for a sign, then at least for a conviction and the faith that love has conquered death?

It's okay to be in that state. It's okay, but all of us need to come to the point where we realize we can't look for the living among the dead, because he is risen.

One Missing Piece

For 120 days Jesus continued to work until the Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and by all accounts that transformed the disciples and the new followers more than anything else had ever done. Certainly they felt like winners. Until that time, it's very clear they felt, "We may have made the wrong choice. We believed that the kingdom of God was coming. Jesus said it will come before some of us would even taste death, but four months on, not much has changed. Persecution is beginning to build."

It's quite clear that many people were beginning to think this may not work out. Then, the resurrection came and the Pentecost came, and suddenly there were hundreds, even thousands of people with conviction that a new era had begun.

Still, we know, through the teaching of our True Parents that for Jesus, this still was not real resurrection, because there was one piece of his life, his mission, that he had not been able to complete. That was to marry and become the True Father together with his wife, the True Mother. Two thousand years later, when Jesus Christ appeared on Easter Sunday 1935 to Sun Myung Moon, our True Father, his first words, according to True Father, was, "Come, let us go to the Blessing." True Father was only 15 years old; he really didn't know what Jesus meant. In fact, he wasn't immediately sure that this was Jesus. He'd only been a Christian for a few years.

Meeting Jesus

I remember when I was 15 and thought about Jesus. This was in England. The image in my mind was, I think, summed up by the phrase 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild'. The books that I studied from the children's Bible showed a very gentle Jesus, perhaps with a lamb in his arm and a staff, and a very, very mild face. In fact, one of the most famous portraits of Jesus of the last 200 years was based on a model who was actually a woman, not a man. People felt that Jesus would have been serene and peaceful.

True Father says that when he met Jesus for the first time, he was terrified because this Jesus was a man in pain, a man with a mission yet unfulfilled. A man so desperate to share the secrets of Heaven that had

not been revealed. It was really terrifying.

I'd like to read you, a little bit, from True Father's autobiography, *As A Peace Loving Global Citizen*, where True Father talks about that experience, the first meeting of Jesus:

"It was the night before Easter in the year I turned sixteen. I was on Mount Myodu praying all night and begging God in tears for answers." The questions he asked were: "Why had He created a world so filled with sorrow and despair? Why was the all-knowing and all-powerful God leaving the world in such pain? What should I do for my tragic homeland? ... Early Easter morning, after I had spent the entire night in prayer, Jesus appeared before me...in an instant, like a gust of wind, and said to me, 'God is in great sorrow because of the pain of humankind. You must take on a special mission on earth having to do with Heaven's work.'"

Later, True Father said,

"My encounter with Jesus changed my life completely. His sorrowful expression was etched into my heart as if it had been branded there, and I could not think of anything else. From that day on, I immersed myself completely in the Word of God. At times, I was surrounded by endless darkness and filled with such pain that it was difficult to breathe. At other times, my heart was filled with joy, as though I were watching the morning sun rise above the horizon."

My question to you: What do you think was more common, the nights of darkness, or the mornings of joy? True Father's description of his battle to inherit and understand the mission of Jesus is really revealing. Because in it he shares how very very difficult and slow it was. Later on in this autobiography, we come to learn that it took him nine years to fully grasp what it was that Jesus wanted to say to him. I'll be honest, in my earlier reading of this, I felt rather naively that if Jesus appeared to you in person and gave you directions from God, one time should be enough. What more could you want? True Father explained that that wasn't always the case.



A Slow and Steady Breakthrough

True Father said, and I quote again:

"On those days when my prayers and dedication connected to Heaven, Jesus appeared to me without fail and conveyed special messages...His words were always on the mark, and they struck deep into my bosom like sharp arrows."

There were other days, he said, when his prayer and dedication wasn't enough. That was a surprise to me, because I love True Father and I know that he lived his entire life with the utmost intensity and sincerity, and I believed that when you live like that you can expect to hear from God every day—well, at least once a week. (Laughter)

It turns out that that wasn't true. True Father was quite systematic knowing that Jesus wanted to teach him

new truth from the Bible. He acquired three of them, a Korean one, of course, a Japanese, and one in English. He would lay them out and he'd read them one right next to the other and he made marks on the page when he felt he had a new insight. He said after a while he couldn't really read the pages anymore because there were so many notes. I'd be lying if I told you I was like that in Seminary, but you'd do that, right? You'd open a book, and write notes in the margin.

Recently, I came across my first copy of the Divine Principle from 1976. Actually, I joined the church on Easter Sunday, 1976. I guess today is 40 years. I looked at the notes I made then, and none of them make any sense at all. What was I thinking? I really didn't understand that. This was True Father's experience; he would make a lot of notes, he studied very hard, he'd think he'd reached a breakthrough, and then it would dawn upon him, no, that's not right. Actually, that's not correct. Then he'd have to start again. He said that it took more than eight years of this, thinking there was a breakthrough and then finding out that it really wasn't. That must have been a very difficult time.

Of course, he did a lot of other things. He went to school. He joined other churches. He went to Japan. He became a student. He fought in the underground movement against Japanese resistance. He spent long nights in prayer and study, and still I realized there were many days that he'd have to say, "I've got nothing. I haven't managed to breakthrough." In fact, it was only in October 1943, 8 ½ years after Easter 1935, that suddenly things changed.



Our Ultimate Parent

True Father said he was on the boat back to Korea and prayed when suddenly into his mind came the fundamental truth of the universe: that God is our Parent and we are His children. God is not the vengeful Lord. God is not the distant Creator who gave up after He saw how things went wrong. God is our Parent.

Many people here are parents. Did you ever have the experience of losing a child? Even for a little bit? Many years ago, Fumiko and I were in Brazil. We went there to Jardim, which was a kind of farm for retreats.

True Father was there. He'd invited us to come down and taste a little bit of the Garden of Eden in this unspoiled natural surrounding. By unspoiled, I really mean like the jungle. Anyway, we went into the office to register. While we were registering, our two-year-old son, Nicholas, ran out of the door and disappeared. It was just twilight, and in Brazil twilight lasts about three minutes until suddenly it's dark.

Suddenly, we realized he wasn't there. On the walls of this office, there were interesting pictures. There was an anaconda that swallowed a man. There were large crocodiles and many other snakes, and our little two-year-old boy is out there in the darkness. That was a terrifying moment.

In that moment, we went out to find our son. Of course, we did find him. It was probably only 10-15 minutes later, but I can honestly say those were the 10 longest minutes of our lives. Looking back on it, I think maybe God has had that kind of desperate feeling for 6,000 years. God doesn't feel that the end of each day, "Well, my children haven't come back. I guess I'll start again tomorrow." No, God is awake all night hoping for the day when his sons and daughters will come home.

What It Means to Be the Messiah

After True Father realized that God is our Parent, he said, “It was as if somebody had turned on a movie projector and I began to see the whole of God’s providential history play out on the screen in front of me. I saw the Fall of Adam and Eve. I saw their confusion because they didn’t really know what had happened. I saw God’s weeping as they left the Garden. I saw Moses, and Abraham, and all the saints as if it was an unstoppable movie. I couldn’t turn it off. The realizations began to come thick and fast. I filled notebooks everyday whereas in the past, a year might pass and nothing was recorded.”

At the end of that time, just three months, after 8 ½ years of almost nothing, True Father finally grasped what it meant to be the Lord of the Second Coming. His relationship with Jesus changed during that time. In the beginning, of course, as a child, he’d known Jesus as the gentle teacher. Then he had this direct encounter, which was kind of fearful and challenging because Jesus made it very clear that without him he can’t fulfill what he has to do. Then, they were like a student and the teacher for a while. Jesus was the teacher and True Father as the student. At one dramatic point, Jesus became True Father’s opponent.

It was a time when True Father needed to stand up for what he believed in. In some way, God arranged it so that he would have to feel the rejection, not only of Jesus, but of all the other religious leaders as well, and even God himself would tell him, “You’re wrong. This is not the right thing.” Remember, he had that feeling many times before and he really was wrong, but this was the time when he had to be absolutely certain that he’d discovered the real truth.

This period of conflict lasted 40 days. At the end of that time, he finally got the blessing and God said, “You’re right.” From that moment on, he said Jesus was his younger brother and finally, even, like his son, because he managed to completely inherit everything that Jesus had come to teach.



Our Personal Resurrection

That was the second resurrection in human history, and the third one is the resurrection of ourselves, because after all, exciting and dramatic though it is to hear about an encounter that happened 81 years ago this morning, and of course, the finish of it 72 years ago when True Father recognized who he really was, if we leave it there, we accomplish nothing.

I think our task on this Easter morning is to consider the resurrection of ourselves. How’s that going? How are we doing on the path to the perfection and the perfect understanding of God that He wants us all to have?

If you’re like me, you’ll probably think, there are some good points, there are some things I really get, and then there are also some things I’m not getting. We have doubts. We have worries. We have moments when we think this may not work out. Anyone ever felt that way?

I think we all go through those moments of uncertainty. It would be a mistake to think that that means we’ve got nowhere, but it does mean that our resurrection is not yet complete. Because if it is, as we said in the beginning, that brings us to a state where we’re absolutely confident, we don’t have any doubts, we don’t have any difficulties. That’s something that needs working on and developing everyday.

The big thing I’ve realized, particularly in the last three years as I’ve held this responsibility, is I can’t do it by myself. I cannot resurrect myself. The Divine Principle makes a big thing about the human portion

of responsibility, does it not? It explains that if we human beings don't do our 5% responsibility God can't do His 95% and the completion of His Will cannot happen. That's true, but it's a big mistake to think that I can do my 5% responsibility to resurrect myself by myself. We absolutely cannot.

Human responsibility was lost by a couple, by a family. Adam and Eve, by losing the love of God, doomed, as it were, all their descendants. That also means that one couple, and even our own couples, can turn that back. True Parents have opened the way for all of humanity to have a chance to experience the love of God, but you and I, and all of us, have the opportunity to make sure that our descendants and our relatives, and the world that we live in, can come back into the love of God. We don't need to overthink this. It remains as our task of resurrection and revival.

Your Daily Challenge

Let me read, again, from True Father's words:

"The joy of the spiritual resurrection of Jesus could not be the joy that all things, human beings, Jesus, and God should want to possess eternally. We have to say that that joy is mingled with sorrow. Only when we establish the joy of complete resurrection, as universal joy on this earth, can God rejoice more than the joy he felt over the resurrection of Jesus."

This is powerful stuff. In a way, True Father is saying that our resurrection, our revival, our conviction in the truth, in God, and the Divine Principle is more important to God than the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning. Those are fighting words, but it's true. It's also true that that's what Jesus wants more than anything. Jesus doesn't want us to maintain the position where we're always looking up, always looking to a distant heaven and a distant Jesus, and not recognizing that we, ourselves, are destined to become, and are, the true sons and daughters of God.

What is it that you can do today to taste a little of the resurrection power that God wants to share? Remember, True Father said that our resurrection is actually more important than Jesus's if we can accomplish it here on the earth. Of course, we have some clues. True Father left a lot of clues about how to experience resurrection. One way is to live for the sake of others, to put other people first. Resurrection is not some kind of competitive game where you climb up the spiritual hill by pushing other people down. It doesn't work like that. Neither does it work by a mental exercise. You can't be resurrected just by reading a speech, or saying a prayer. Those are good things to do, but to really taste resurrection and to share that resurrection with other people, we do need to do something for somebody else. You could rephrase the question to: how am I going to serve another of God's children today to taste resurrection? Even one of the simplest things we can do on Easter Sunday is talk to people, not to share problems and complaints, but rather to share the truth of who we really are.

Who We Are to God

I'd like to conclude by speaking a little bit about the question of who we really are from the section on Christology in the Divine Principle. According to the Divine Principle, the task of everyone of us is to become a mature son or daughter of God who has completed God's Three Great Blessings: to become mature, multiply, and have righteous dominion over the earth.

The Divine Principle says a full mature person is unique in all the cosmos since he, or she, is the lord of the entire world which cannot realize its full value without him, or her. I'd like you to turn to the person next to you and say, "You are unique in all the cosmos and God cannot fulfill His purpose without you." Don't be shy, just say it to their face.

There is no greater value than the value of a person who has realized God's Ideal of Creation. That is the highest imaginable value.

God rejoices in your resurrection more than he rejoiced over the resurrection of Jesus. That's a big one. You could even say it to a new person, or the same one, "God rejoices more in your resurrection than that of Jesus."

One of my favorite Bible verse is Hebrews 13, verse 8. It says, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. I'm absolutely sure that this is true of our True Parents, the return of Christ; the same yesterday, today, and forever. True Parents will never change. True Father said many times, "I will never ever leave you alone. I will take care of you. I will be responsible. I will love you forever." I realize, also, that the way that True Parents can do that practically is through each other. The way we accomplish this is that we take it on ourselves to fulfill True Parent's promise to care for each other yesterday, today, and forever. Thank you.