WOW: Word Of the Week

Resurrection

April 1, 2026

"Resurrection is for those who have died."

This year, I have been reviewing my notes from sixty years of ministry. Shortly before I retired from full-time preaching, I awoke early on an Easter Sunday to the sound of rain. I do not remember many rainy Easters! Easter was late that year–but not as late as it can be (which due to the way the date of Easter is calculated can be as late as the last week of April).

I am retired from fulltime ministry. I have not had a weekly preaching assignment for almost two decades. Nonetheless, I am aware of the calendar. Easter Sunday is coming. What will Sunday's sermons say? In view of the story of the cross, the purpose of God, and the tensions of our world, what will be the message on the Sunday when more Christians are in church than on any other Sunday?

Some preachers will find their text in Mark, based on its fear and faith tension, and especially the fear of the women when they heard and witnessed the resurrection (Mark 16:8).

One Easter outline took its text from 1 Pet. 3:18: Christ suffered for sins, as our substitute, for a purpose.

The obvious theme will be resurrection! And do not miss the point: Resurrection is for those who have died!

What is an appropriate WOW this week?

Today I am reflecting on Phil. 3:7-11. Paul is in prison. He is an old man (at least 60 years old). I am well over 60; 60 does not seem old to me anymore. Paul's overriding desire was to progress in the faith – to know the power of Christ's rising, resurrection. Paul makes clear: this knowledge of the resurrection is not only mental. It means participating in Christ's death, suffering, and image. Futility, fatality, and finality are banished for Paul in this great goal. He no longer has to live with the reality of his false start shackling him. He is no longer plagued by doubts about whether he has lived life correctly. He no longer fears the finality of death.

The resurrection is God's answer to the futility of life, the fatality of failure, and the finality of death. The resurrection of Jesus is demonstration and promise that we too can participate in God's newness. If resurrection is the answer, why do so many refuse the resurrecting renewing power of participation in Christ's death? Paul makes clear that the resurrecting power of baptism provides newness of life and points to God's resurrecting power with the promise that we shall share in the last resurrection. Death leading to life – the death of the old person and the life of the new person. Physical death and eternal life.

I pray that on Easter Sunday preachers will, in some meager way, communicate the power of resurrection! I celebrate each week the death and resurrection of Christ in the Lord's Supper. I anticipate his coming, knowing that I have in some inexplicable way come to share in the hope of the final resurrection. The news is just as good (or better) -- my life on earth has been changed forever by the resurrecting power of Jesus, to make me what I was not, could not have been, and never would have been by my own power.

Thank God for the resurrection!