

Surely It Is God Who Saves Me

1. From His Anger 2. From My Enemies 3. From My Sadness 4. From My Silence

Share with me, please, the Christian Easter greeting: Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!** I love that! I love that because it's more than just a statement of fact. It is the most important fact in history – that Jesus is not dead but alive. But it's more than just a fact; it's a fact that share and treasure together. This is what unites us; there's nothing more important to us! And while the world rejects the resurrection, for us, the fact that Christ is risen is the anchor of our faith and the basis for our hope. So again: Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!** I love that!

You know what else I love? A little ditty I learned as a kid: *"Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior."* That's one of my favorite refrains of all time. It was a Psalm refrain in our previous hymnal. But even before that it was the refrain of an anthem called "The First Song of Isaiah." We sang it back in grade school; I can remember the blue covered sheet music; everyone loved it: children, adults, back then, and still today. *"Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior."* I love that!

That refrain is based on our reading for today from Isaiah 12. It's a short little chapter – only six verses long. But it's beautiful, and I love it! Isaiah has a way of crafting beautiful, poetic words in a meaningful, memorable way. On Good Friday Isaiah painted for us a picture of Jesus the Suffering Servant dying on the cross. But today is Easter Sunday, and Jesus is risen from the dead! And so we've gathered together in the early hours of this Easter Sunday morning to celebrate his resurrection with our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ who are crazy enough to get up this early in the morning. No, it's good for us to be here! This is the time of the day the women found the tomb empty and became the first mortal eyewitnesses of the resurrection. That first Easter morning there were no hymnals, no sheet music, no choirs, no organ, no church building to worship in. But if they had a song to sing, I think it would be this one: *"Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior."* And that's our song, too! Surely, it is God who saves me!

He saves me from his anger. **"I will praise you, LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me."** Why was God angry? He was angry because of our sins, because we disobey the will of our heavenly Father. And that makes him angry, and rightfully so. But instead of directing his anger toward us, he poured out his wrath against sin on Jesus – on the cross, on Good Friday, when Jesus willingly stepped into our place and bore the punishment for our sin. **"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him"** (Isa 53:5). So now, **"Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me."** Because of Easter, your Father forgives you and embraces you with his love and says, "My dear child, everything's alright; I've got everything taken care of for you. You are mine forever, and I love you." The resurrection of Jesus from the dead gives us the comfort of knowing that our Father in heaven truly loves us and fully forgives us. We do not have an angry, vengeful tyrant of a God, eager to punish us. He already punished Jesus in our place. **"Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me."** Surely it is God who saves me from his anger.

And from my enemies. Verse two says, **"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."** (You can hear the refrain in the song, can't you?) **"The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."** If the Lord is my defense, that must mean I have enemies from whom I need to be defended. So who are those enemies? The three great enemies of mankind are sin, death, and the devil. Without Christ, we are all slaves to sin, chained up in sin's stranglehold, unable to break free. As far as death, we're all going to die; that's just a reality. And without Jesus, physical death would lead us straight to eternal death in hell. And as for the devil, he loves what God hates and hates what God loves. And since God loves you, that means the devil hates you and will do whatever he can to lead you to sin, which leads to unbelief, which leads to hell. **"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour"** (1 Pt 5:8). Those are our enemies.

So we need a strong defender, a warrior, who will stand up for us and protect us and defeat our enemies. That strong defender is Christ Jesus! He defeated sin by never sinning. He defeated death by rising from the dead. And he defeated the devil by accomplishing God's plan to save us, through his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus is our defender, our warrior, our champion, our brother, our Lord, our Savior, our God. He won the victory against sin, death, and the devil – enemies that we could never overcome. **"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."** Surely it is God who saves me from my enemies.

He also saves me from my sadness. **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”** With joy! Without Easter, there can be no real joy, no real meaning in life, no hope for anything beyond this life. But Jesus’ resurrection fills our hearts with **“an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Pt 1:8)** that no sadness on earth can steal away from us. And that’s really important, because this life is full of sadness. Maybe today you are sad because Easter reminds you of loved ones who have died. And so today you’re sad because you’re missing someone: your spouse, your child, your parent, your friend; or because someone you love is soon to pass from this world to the next. Death touches all of us and fills us with sadness. Or maybe today you’re sad because you feel lonely, abandoned, forgotten, like no one cares about you, or you have no one to turn to, or someone you love has let you down; and so you feel all alone. Or maybe today you feel sad because of your sin, because you’re ashamed of something you’ve done and you feel guilty about it.

If you have sadness in your heart for any reason at all, then I’m here today to tell you: Christ is risen, so **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”** Jesus once met a sad woman drawing water from a well, and he said to her, **“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14).** God’s love is like a cool glass of water that quenches the thirsty soul. God loves you so much that he pictures his love as a well of water that never runs dry. And by raising Jesus from the dead, God dips his bucket into this well of salvation and says, “This is for you; drink deeply.” If your thirsty soul today is filled with sadness, then please remember and never forget: Jesus is alive; he is with you, and he loves you. Let his resurrection and his Word, the water of life, fill you with joy, so that **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”** Surely it is God who saves me from my sadness.

And finally, Easter saves me from my silence. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is so joyous, so powerful, so life-changing that we just can’t help but share it! We can’t be silent! Listen to how not-silent Christians are: **“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”** That is the opposite of silence! When a person comes to believe in Jesus as their Savior, the Spirit-wrought response in that Christian is to thank God and tell others. We cannot keep silent about this! The resurrection of Jesus changes everything! So we want to **“make known among the nations what he has done.”** That’s why we invite people to church; that’s why we share our faith; that’s why we **“shout aloud and sing for joy.”** **“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise” (Ps 51:15).** Surely it is God who saves me from my silence.

There’s a phrase that’s used two times in this reading. **“In that day.”** In what day? Well, there really is no more important day in the history of the world than Easter. On Easter, Jesus won the victory for our salvation. So when Isaiah 12 says, **“In that day,”** because of Easter, every day is **“that day.”** Every day you live on this earth is a day for you to rejoice in the Easter Gospel – not just once a year on Easter Sunday, but every day – because every day God loves you; every day your sins are forgiven; every day your salvation is secure; every day heaven is your inheritance; every day your Savior is alive. So live your life every day as an Easter Christian, because every day is **“the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24).** *“Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.”*

Isaiah 12:1-6

In that day you will say: “I will praise you, LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴ In that day you will say: “Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”