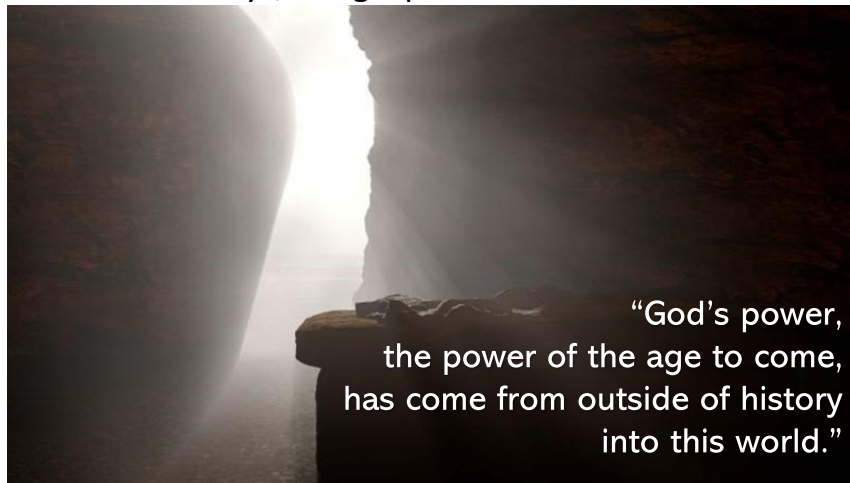


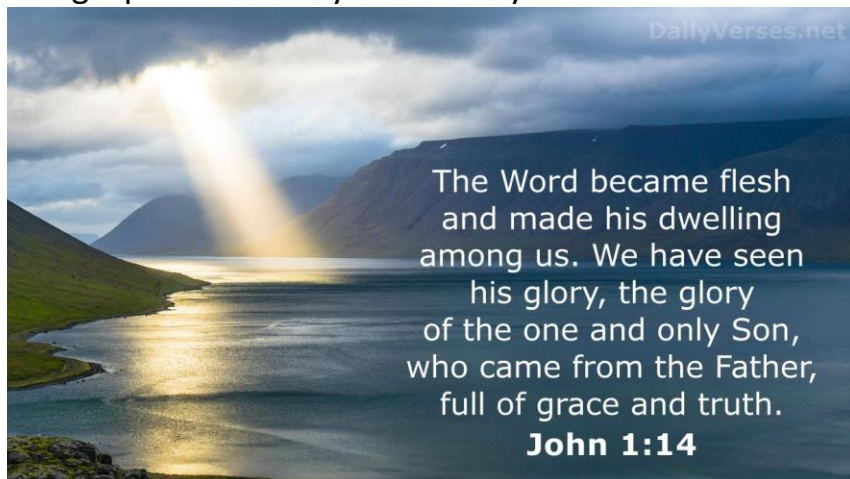
Look at the progression in these verses.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of when he had come to their city. There he had announced to them the news of Jesus. As Tim Keller says, the gospel announces that...



p.4

The gospel of John says it this way...



Paul did not urge his listeners to believe in a myth.

In his preaching he pointed them to the historical details pertaining to the life of Jesus Christ – his birth, his teachings, his miracles, his death, his burial, his resurrection.

What happened as the Corinthians listened?

v.1b - many of them received the news of the gospel, believing in Jesus.

They took their stand, as Paul wrote, upon the verifiable historical events of the gospel...and as a result – v.2a - were saved from their sin by God.

It is clear from the passage that Paul didn't invent the gospel – look again at v.3.

We know from the book of Acts that Paul received the gospel in an encounter he had with the risen Jesus outside of the city of Damascus.

Following this life transforming, face to face meeting with Jesus... Paul dedicated the remainder of his life... to passing on... the very news which had saved him from his sin and brought him into relationship with the triune God.

The specifics that Paul details in v.3-8...

**1 Corinthians 15:3-8 is believed
“to have been formulated within
months of Jesus’ death.”**

James Dunn

Jesus Remembered, p.855.

In this verses we have the gospel in a nutshell...

- **Christ died for our sins**
- **Christ was buried**
- **Christ was raised on the third day**
- **Christ appeared**
to Cephas and then to the Twelve
and then to many others

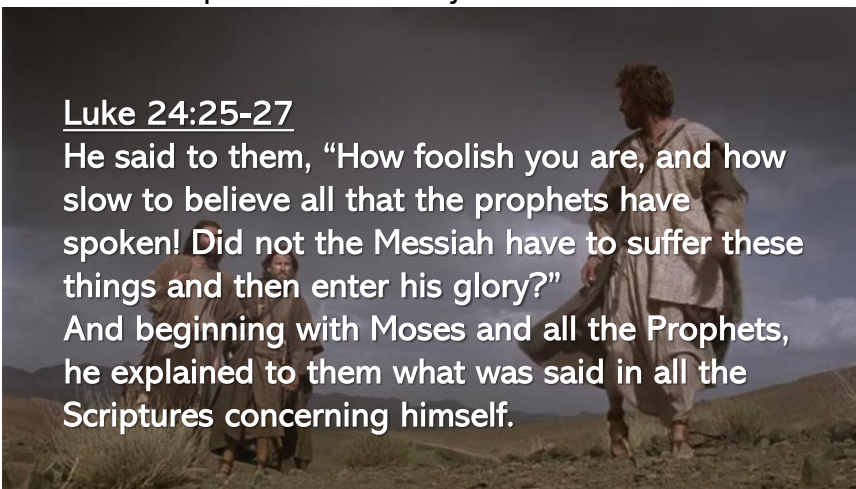
There is an important phrase, which is used twice in verses 3-4 –
“according to the Scripture...”

Do you remember what Jesus did on the day he rose from the dead!
In the afternoon two of his followers journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus – a trip of about eleven kilometers.
Jesus joined them – but they were kept from recognizing him.



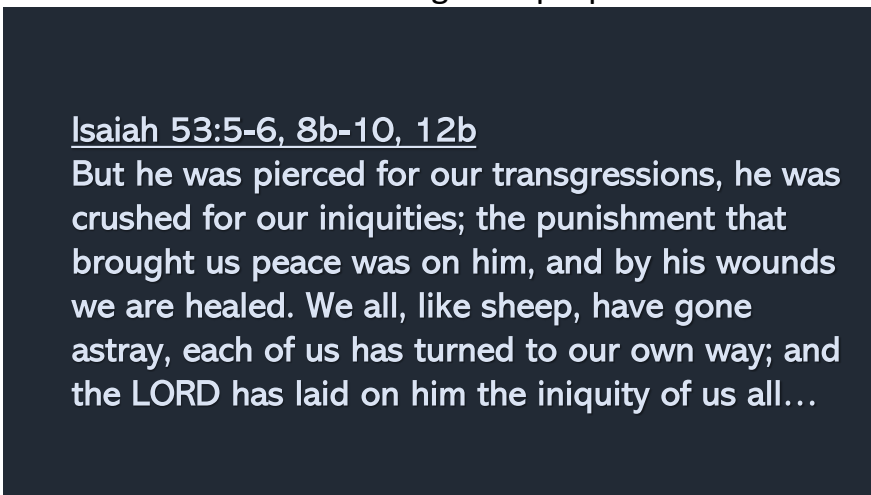
Jesus asked them what they were talking about... and as you know... they told him about his trial, sentencing, death and the claim by some women that Jesus had risen from the dead.

It was at this point Jesus interjected – listen to what he said to them.



The OT Scriptures had prophesied hundreds and hundreds of years earlier, that God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ... **...would die for humanity’s sins...**

Look at what God said through the prophet Isaiah...



Isaiah 53:5-6, 8b-10, 12b

...for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit found in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer...

Isaiah 53:5-6, 8b-10, 12b

...he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

(See also Psalm 22:7, 14-16, 18; Isaiah 50:6)

The OT Scriptures had also foretold...

...and that he would be buried and raised on the third day...

Look at what God said of the Christ through David...

Psalm 16:10

...you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

Look at what God said about the Christ through the prophet Isaiah...

Psalm 16:10

...you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

Isaiah 53:11

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities...

After Paul had written 1 Corinthians, he had opportunity, because of his arrest and imprisonment to speak with the Roman governor Festus and King Agrippa and Queen Bernice.

At one point Festus interrupted Paul and shouted, **“You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane.”** Acts 26:24.

Listen to how Paul answered Festus...

Acts 26:25-26

“I am not insane. What I am saying is **true and reasonable.** [King Agrippa] is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.”

The word ‘reasonable’ which Paul used... means careful, rational thought.

Paul was not making wild assertions or retelling fantastical legends.

The gospel of Jesus concerns historical facts that are true, facts that are of public record, facts that are well-known.

- **The tomb of Jesus Christ is empty.**
- **The dead body of Jesus is nowhere to be found.**

This is why Paul could say to Festus, while looking at King Agrippa - The things concerning Jesus Christ and his salvation were...

Acts 26:25-26

"I am not insane. What I am saying is true and reasonable. [King Agrippa] is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it **was not done in a corner.**"

King Agrippa did not challenge that statement by Paul. He didn't dispute with Paul about any of the public and well-known details concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is because they were not secret things.

All King Agrippa said to Paul was this – **"Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"** Acts 26:28.

Why did the king say that?

Because he knew the gospel of Jesus that Paul was proclaiming... demands a response.

And at that point... and the Scripture doesn't say why... King Agrippa, was unwilling to commit his life to Jesus Christ.

Listen to how the book of Acts describes Agrippa's response, Acts 26:30: **"The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice, and those sitting with them."**

Rather than opening his life to receive Jesus because he believed in him, Agrippa left the room – he walked away....he thought in doing so, he could escape the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Possibly he thought he could put off to another day having to decide. But the gospel makes no provision for a person to sit on the fence.



One is either with Christ or against him...there is no middle ground... to not decide is actually a decision against Jesus.

Paul continued in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 detailing who the risen Christ appeared to. Throughout history there have been skeptics who've posited that Jesus' closest followers collaborated together to put forward the story that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Does the evidence for the resurrection leave any room for such a possibility? Listen to Charles Colson's answer to this question:

"I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified, they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40+ years, never once denying it. Every one of them was beaten, tortured, stoned or put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world -and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40+ years? Absolutely impossible." Chuck Colson

https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/27694.Charles_W_Colson

Look again at the list of names mentioned by Paul.

- Cephias [Peter]
- The Twelve
- More than 500 men and women at the same time
- James
- All the apostles
- Paul

After appearing to Peter and the Twelve, who does Paul mention next?

The risen Jesus appeared to **“more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time...”**

When Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians... he was able to say of this group of 500+ men and women... **“...most are still living.”**

These individuals were still accessible – if a person wanted to speak with them, they could.

There are two hard to refute facts regarding the resurrection –

- (1) the tomb where Jesus’ body had been laid is empty, and
- (2) hundreds of people claimed to have seen Jesus after he rose from the dead.

Tim Keller says...

“If we had only the empty tomb, then one could plausibly claim the body was stolen. If we only had the eye-witness testimonies, one could say they had to be fantasies. Together, however, they give evidence that something extraordinary happened.”

Tim Keller

p.11

Tom Wright says...

“If you rule out a resurrection, you have a formidable challenge – to come up with a historically possible alternative explanation for these two facts, as well as for the birth of the church itself.”

Tom Wright

He continues...

“The early Christians did not invent the empty tomb, nor the meetings with, nor the sightings of the risen Jesus...

Nobody was expecting this kind of thing; no kind of conversion experience would have invented it, not matter how guilty or forgiven they felt, no matter how many hours they pored over the Scripture. To suggest otherwise is to stop doing history and enter into a fantasy world.” *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p.707.

In his book ‘Surprised by Scripture,’ Tom Wright adds...

“It is impossible to account for the early Christian belief in Jesus as Messiah without the resurrection.”

Tom Wright

p.46,50

Paul’s inclusion in 1 Corinthians 15 of himself as an eyewitness is also significant, considering who he had been before he met Jesus.

Listen to what Paul said of himself to a crowd in Jerusalem, Acts 22:3-5...

“...I was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.”

Acts 22:3-5

This was Paul’s testimony.

What is obvious is that his life would have continued on this same trajectory – persecuting, arresting, and killing the followers of Jesus... if he had not had an encounter with the risen Jesus.

Before he met Jesus... Paul had considered himself to be an exceptional morally good person.

In fact, when it came the righteousness based on the law...that is, to the keeping all the rules of the OT...Paul said of himself that he was “**faultless.**” Philippians 3:6

However, when he encountered the risen Jesus....which he would later write about to the church at Rome...this realization broke into his mind and heart as he knelt on the road leading into Damascus – and it was this...

There is no one righteous,
not even one;
there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.
All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.

Romans 3:10-12

Paul realized in the presence of the risen Jesus, that the moral life he had lived... when measured against the righteousness of God... was utterly insufficient! This realization hit Paul like a ton of bricks...



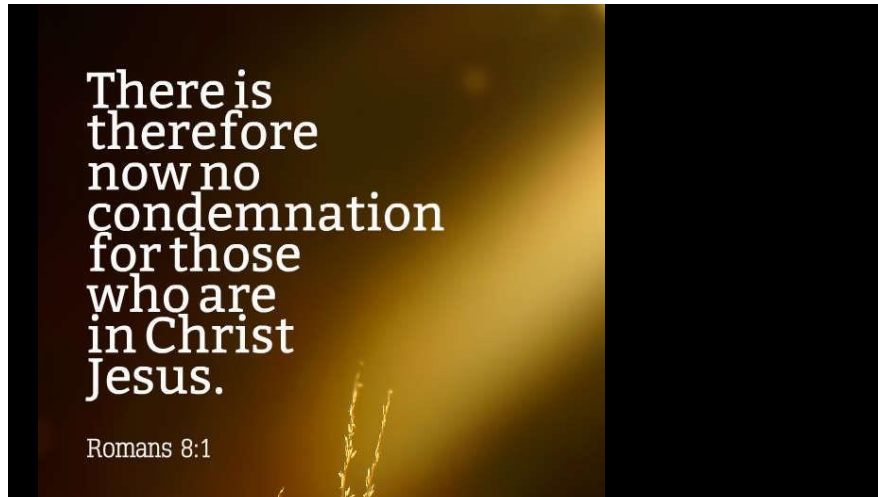
...because he knew at that moment... he was tragically lost... his guilt was beyond immense... and that he was deserving of eternal separation from God.

But kneeling on the road leading into Damascus, Paul was rocked to the core of his being, because instead of judgment, which he deserved, he was shown mercy.

This is what Paul is speaking of in 1 Corinthians 15:10 – “**...by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace was not without effect.**”

The grace of God forgave – Paul the persecutor, Paul the murderer, Paul the blasphemer, Paul the arrogant.

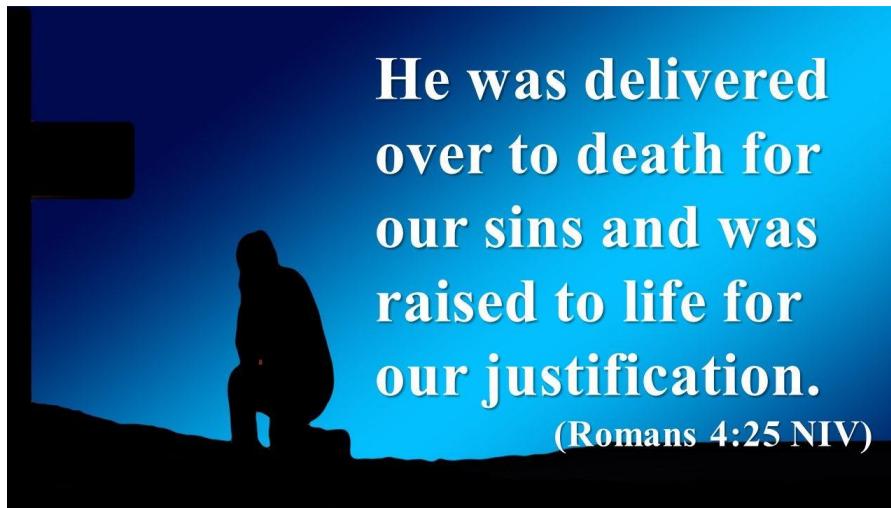
Years later, Paul wrote to the church at Rome and stated with all veracity...



Through trust in Jesus, Paul's sin debt was removed from him as far as the east is from the west.

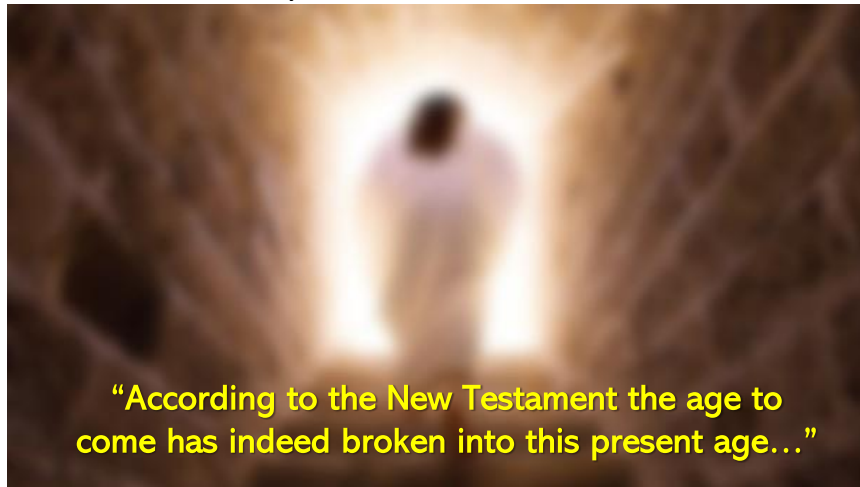
But the grace of God reached even further.

Paul was justified, as the Scripture says... because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.



This statement... raised to life for our justification... carries such weight and speaks of such glory.

Michael Horton says of this...



Justification, Volume 2, p.257, 275.

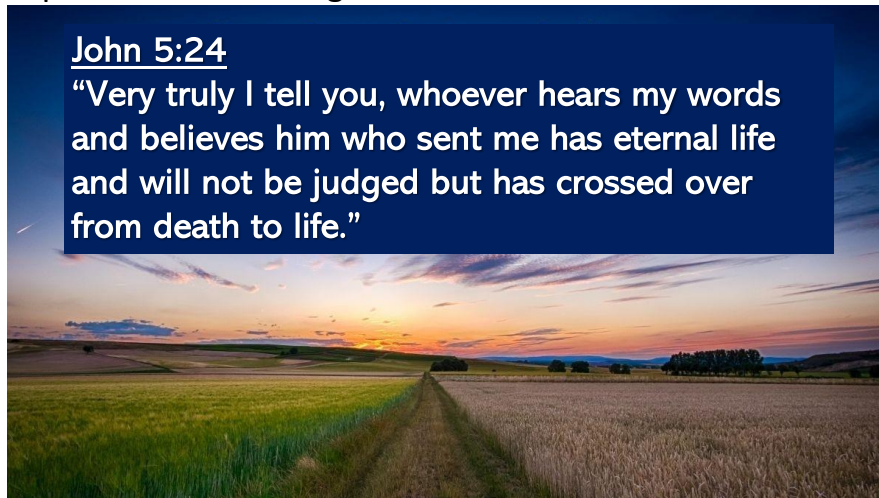
For those who trust in Jesus Christ the verdict of judgement day... when all appear before God to give an account of what they have done with their life...this verdict is brought forward into the present.

What does that mean?

To be justified... by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone... is to experience the most glorious truth which Jesus had announced in John’s gospel...

John 5:24

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”



As he hung upon a Roman cross Jesus Christ was judged for our sin.

And because he walked out of the tomb, for all who trust in Jesus... there is now no condemnation.

The verdict of the future has been spoken over the believer’s life in the here and now.

- We are forgiven because our legal indebtedness was taken away and nailed to the cross. See Colossians 2:14
- We are rescued from the dominion of darkness. See Colossians 1:13
- The powers and authorities of evil that had deceived and enslaved us have been disarmed and triumphed over by the cross. See Colossians 2:15



The cross in and of itself is a symbol of death, not triumph... unless there is an empty tomb... which there is... praise God!

Our Lord Jesus who was cruelly crucified rose from the dead.

With the cross and the empty tomb in view... Jesus had announced in advance that whoever..... hears his words and believes in God who sent him into the world...will not be judged.

Through faith in him, Jesus Christ... the believer crosses over...



... from death to life.

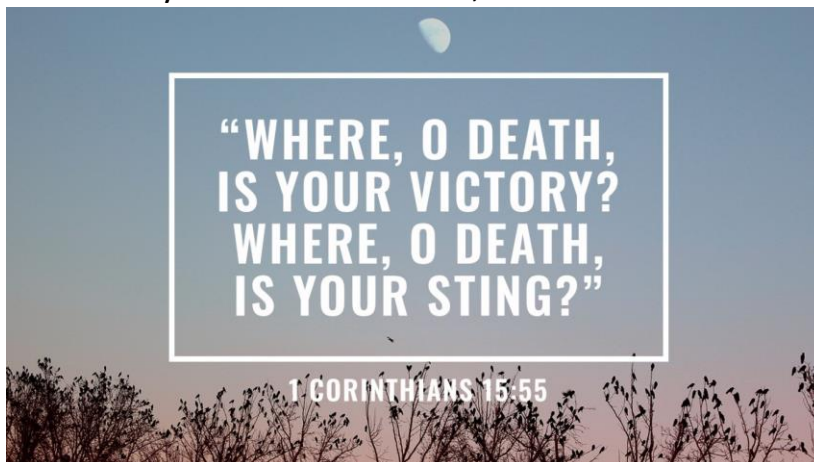
This is the great love the Father lavishes on us because Jesus is risen from the dead. See 1 John 3:1

Because of the resurrection, Jesus followers are brought into sweet fellowship with the triune God.



What was lost at Eden God has begun to restore because of the victory of the cross and the empty tomb.

For the follower of Jesus our hope is not just a future one, though future it is. We can say with all confidence, what Paul wrote of in 1 Corinthians 15:55 –



That said, the resurrection of Jesus brings into the here and now... into the lives of all God's people, God's power from heaven.

The age to come has already begun, even though the fulness of the kingdom of God is not yet realized as it will be when Jesus returns.

But in the here and now...the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is transforming the lives of his followers who gather together in local churches around the globe, and who, in turn who are impacting neighborhoods, communities, cities, provinces, nations as they serve others in Jesus' name and with his power mediated to them from heaven through the Holy Spirit.

I close with a testimony that illustrates what this looks like.



Pastor Jeremy Treat visited an extremely poor area of Nairobi, known as Kibera.



A stream of open sewage flowed alongside the road.

On either side people lived in flimsy shelters.

Many children played in the street with no clothes on.

Pastor Jeremy told of the angst he felt as he walked by a young girl, maybe 12 years old, who sold her body to earn a living.

The sights of this slum left him feeling overwhelmed.

Finally, he came to a shack in which 70 people were singing at the top of their lungs, with their arms raised as they praised God.

Treat says, “In that impoverished slum, I knew that the kingdom of God had come... not yet in the fullness of God’s future promise, but it was there in the midst of great suffering and brokenness....”

God's reign was breaking in and transforming the lives of people who had nothing... yet knew that in Christ they had everything. It wasn't that these people somehow were able to achieve a tranquil inner psychological state. God's love was being poured out on them and it flowed outward through them."

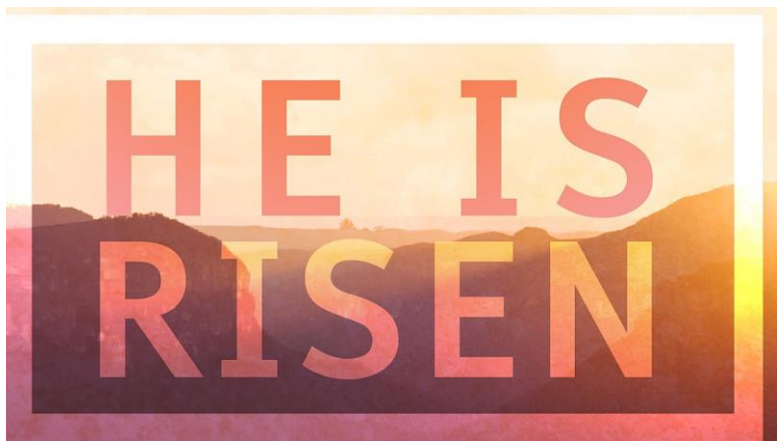
Treat discovered that those of this church were not content to leave their community in its disempowered, miserable state. As he visited with them, he heard story after story of how these followers of Jesus loved and served others in their community in the name of Jesus.

Treat finishes his testimony by saying, "What I saw in that shack was a glimpse of the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and will one day renew all of creation."

This is the power of the gospel that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

- Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
- He was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
- He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.
- After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living.
- Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all to Paul.

In the gospel we encounter the grace of God, that is powerful and effective to save and transform.



Praise God... Jesus is Risen!