

## The Bells are Ringing!

By Santiago Lange



Many years ago a little village in Austria was about to be taken by Napoleon's conquering army. It was Easter morning. At dawn the bells of the village pealed out across the countryside, celebrating that Christ was risen. A startled Napoleon thought the bells were celebrating the arrival of the Austrian army and so he retreated in haste. Instead of Napoleon, peace reigned in the countryside. A victory was won without even fighting a battle.

During this Easter time the bells are ringing again, celebrating the fact that Christ has risen. We do not have Napoleon's army threatening us. Our battle is with sin, death, and life itself. Struggles from without and struggles from within. Battles that often make us feel defeated, just like those faithful and heavy hearted women on that first Easter morning. They came to place spices on their Lord's body. But when they arrived, His body was not there. And the angels said to them *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen."* The angels might as well have said: *"Why do you feel discouraged, when Christ has won the victory? Have you not heard the victory bells of Easter?"*

Are we joyfully celebrating the victory that we have won in Christ not just during this Easter season, but each day of our life? Or, are we still living a life of discouragement and defeat? Our triumph is unlike any other that we might experience on earth. Physical successes are short lived. A nation's army may conquer and win control over some land. But, sooner or later, that victory is overturned by another and even stronger army. That's the cycle of human history. But the gain that Christ won for us is forever. No one can take this victory away from us or from Him. Through Christ we have the final victory over death. The cause or the sting of death is sin. In Rom 6:23 we read : *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*. Because of our trespasses, we are subject to decay. Our mortality is a reality. The justice and holiness of God cannot allow sin to be ignored. And so Christ bore our sin on the cross as we read in Isa 53:4-5: *"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed"*.

Christ defeated the power of darkness, the power of Satan by which we were subjected to it. Christ paid the price! We do not need to fear the future. The proof that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to overcome death, is seen in His resurrection. If Jesus had not been raised, the war would have been lost. But the victory belongs to Christ and now it belongs to us as well. During this season we celebrate our conquest over death and over sin. Unfortunately, many people see the Christian faith as something that is only important for the life hereafter. But, we can already be resurrected to a new life here on earth NOW! Because Christ rose, He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. He gave all who believe in Him a new heart. He gave us power to overcome. The victories may at times be small but we are becoming changed from one degree

of glory to another. Yes, we still have our personal sins to deal with. But, let us look over our lives with confidence and acknowledge how God has gained the victory over many battles, over discouragements, over fears.

*2 Cor 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

To experience the resurrection in the next life and in this life, we also must first die. We must be willing to loose this life so that we can receive eternal life. We need to admit that we need Jesus. We need to admit our sin and our inability to do anything about it. Only then will we be raised with Christ. So, let's take hold of that eternal life and let's stop looking at the past and what we have done wrong. Instead let's come to the tomb and see that it is empty. Empty of the power of sin and death. If we have been raised, our tomb is also empty. Gone are past sins, and the power they have over us.

What we as Christians earnestly need to be seeking is not a vision that centers on ourselves or on our accomplishments. What we should be seeking more than anything right now is a vision, a clear picture of God's victory, holiness, power, and grace as it is manifested and expressed in and through our lives, a vision that will comfort us while at the same time motivate us to put all our talents and gifts to use for God's service.

We have victory! The bells are ringing. Christ is risen! And we are risen with Him. May I wish you all a most joyous Easter. Let's keep praying for one another and may our vision of Christ continue to expand our thoughts and hearts. □