

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Live within the resurrection!”
(Easter Sermon)
April 5, 2026

Scripture

Isaiah 53:10-11
John 11:25-26

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (02/22/2026) To know Jesus is to know God on a first name basis
- (03/01/2026) We must let the light of Jesus illuminate our situations and hearts.
- (03/08/26) Jesus is the bread of life. Through faith in Jesus, we have abundant & eternal life. So, no matter how hard it gets, we can say, “So What!? I have abundant & eternal life” and then take the next step.
- (03/15/26) As followers of Jesus, we show people the vineyard. To do that we must stay connected to Jesus and allow Him to prune our hearts.
- (03/29/2026) As followers of Jesus, we are all capable of hearing and recognizing the Shepherd’s voice. But the question is: Do we hear and recognize the Shepherd’s voice?

Core theological idea: The resurrection proves that Jesus defeated death and that he is God in the flesh. Now we must choose between living in or outside the resurrection.

Challenge/purpose: To help people to make the daily decision to live in the resurrection.

The Sermon

You just heard the liturgist recite these wonderful words of Jesus, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Jesus spoke these words about two or three weeks before he was falsely arrested and murdered on a cross. I imagine many of the people watching him suffer and die were dumbfounded as they stared in disbelief. After Jesus breathed his last breath and the Roman soldier pierced his side, there was no doubt that he was dead. From that Friday afternoon when Jesus died and throughout the following Saturday, everyone was in shock. How could this man be the resurrection and the life?

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Then, something incredible happened on the Sunday morning after Jesus died. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So, she ran back to Peter and John, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

Upon hearing this news, Peter and John ran to the tomb. Both were running, but John, being the younger of the two, easily outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. (Peter usually acted first and thought about it later.) He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally, John also went inside and confirmed what Mary had told them. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then they went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary remained at the tomb entrance, crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.”

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

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Mary Magdalene sprinted to the disciples with the glorious news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.

That Sunday evening, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again, Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus Christ rose from the dead! He is the resurrection and the life!!! Glory Hallelujah!!

Right from the beginning, many people found it very difficult to accept the resurrection of Jesus. They just couldn’t understand it. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...”

To many of the Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was a stumbling block. During my first trip to Israel, I was part of a large crowd of Christian pastors, and we had a Jewish guide. Some of the pastors asked the guide why most Jews do not believe that Jesus is the

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Messiah. He replied that many Jews have no problem following Jesus as a Messiah but cannot accept him as God in the flesh. So, the resurrection became a stumbling block because, as I will discuss in a few minutes, the resurrection proves Jesus’ divinity.

To many of the Gentiles, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was foolishness. Around the end of the first century, the Roman historian, Tacitus, described the resurrection of Jesus as evil, hideous, and shameful. To understand this, we must remember that the Crucifixion was how the Romans executed slaves, murderers, rebels and other disposable people. Crucifixion was how the Romans got rid of the dregs of society. So, if God raised from the dead someone who had been crucified, then God was raising from the dead some low-class dog of a person. To the Romans, that couldn’t happen because only the high-class folks deserve resurrection. If God raised a crucified person, then human designations of who matters and who doesn’t matter dissolves. Thus, Jesus’ resurrection is foolishness to the Romans.

So, why do we, as Christians, venerate and contemplate the resurrection of Jesus? What is the big deal? Why do we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every Sunday and make a special holiday for it?

The answer, surprisingly, is simple. The big deal is this: The resurrection of Jesus proves that Jesus is worthy of our worship. Follow this logic:

- The resurrection proves that Jesus conquered death on our behalf.
 - He was dead on Friday but alive on Sunday.
 - He came back to life in a glorified body that will never again die.
- The resurrection of Jesus paves the way for us to receive God’s forgiveness and have eternal life.
 - This is why Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20 – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
 - We are the fruit that will follow Jesus – the first fruit of the resurrection of the dead
 - In other words, we too can look forward to the resurrection of our bodies.
 - You can read about this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-22, Romans 6:4-11, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- The resurrection of Jesus proves that He is fully human and fully God.
 - Only God can save us from death.
 - Only God can pave the way for us to receive God’s forgiveness and have eternal life.

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- Since Jesus is fully human and fully Divine, He is worthy of our worship.

Now, we have a choice. It is a choice we must make each day. We can choose to either live within or outside the resurrection. We choose to live within the resurrection when we repent, receive God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus and offer ourselves to the loving authority of God. We live outside of the resurrection when we continue to do whatever we feel like without any regard to God’s loving authority - we remain our own gods.

Living within the resurrection is living with grace. By grace, we mean God’s unconditional (undeserved) love that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit. Jesus died and then conquered death on our behalf, not because we deserve it, but because God loves us unconditionally.

Do you remember what Jesus said on the cross? He said, “Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.” Before we even knew we needed forgiveness, God decided to offer it to us. We do not have to earn it; we simply receive it. No matter what bad thing you may have done, God will always love you and offer you forgiveness.

Once we receive this forgiveness, God’s grace (God’s unconditional love that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit) will cleanse our hearts of any sinful desires or attitudes and replace them with his holy love. You will become the awesome and loving person God created you to be. Here is how it works: As we walk in a relationship with the Father through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will work to change our hearts so that we can become more holy and loving like Jesus.

Therefore, repentance must be part of receiving God’s forgiveness. Repentance is the sincere desire to change and when we receive God’s forgiveness, we must expect God to change our hearts.

Living outside of the resurrection is living with conditional love. We must earn God’s love. We must be ‘good enough’ to go to heaven. We must perfectly obey God’s law of love with every thought, word, and deed. The more we try to be ‘good enough’ the more we realize how bad we are. At some point, we just give up and believe the lie that we will never become better people. This is no way to live.

Living within the resurrection is living with peace & joy, even when we suffer. No matter how bad things get, we know that God is here, and that God loves us. We also look forward to the resurrection while experiencing eternal life. So, when bad

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things happen, we can say, “So what!? I have eternal life!” This gives us peace & joy.

Living outside resurrection is living with anxiety, worry and even depression at the first hint of something bad happening. If this physical life is truly the only life we have, then we have no hope if something happens to mess it up.

Living within the resurrection is living with courage. The grace, peace & joy that comes with living in the resurrection gives us courage. With this courage we can always take the loving course of action and stand up for justice. When we live in the resurrection, we can say, with confidence, “What do I have to be afraid of? If people kill me, I still live!!!” So, we can take the necessary risks to unconditionally love people and resist oppression.

Living outside the resurrection is living with fear. Living without God’s unconditional love brings anxiety & depression into our hearts. Our thoughts automatically go to worst case scenarios and fear paralysis our lives. When opportunities arise to sacrificially love others or stand up for justice, we weigh the risks and take the path of least resistance.

John Wesley, the leader of the 18th century Methodist revival in England, experienced a moment in his life when he was outside of the resurrection. He was a young, Anglican Priest crossing the Atlantic to become the Chaplain for the Georgia colony. A great storm arose, threatening to sink the ship. John Wesley was sitting in a corner, cowering in fear – afraid to die. A group of Moravian Christians were also on the ship. But, instead of cowering in fear, they were calmly and joyfully singing hymns. After the storm, Wesley realized that the Moravians were demonstrating faith while he demonstrated a lack of faith. He discovered that he was not living in the resurrection.

When Wesley returned from his failed ministry in Georgia, he still felt outside of the resurrection. He was miserable and questioned his faith. He wrote in his diary, “I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? Who will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'”

Then, on May 24, 1738 he began to live in the resurrection. He went to a Bible study that night on Aldersgate street. His soul was troubled, and he did not feel like going, but he still went. Then, when the facilitator was reading Martin Luther’s preface to his commentary on Romans, Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. He wrote in his diary, “In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the

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Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” This became known as John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience.

From this point on, Wesley lived in the resurrection. He constantly lived with God’s grace. With this grace, Wesley overcame the power of sin and sought to love all people. He also enjoyed the peace and joy that comes with God’s grace. With peace and joy, Wesley exhibited courage. He preached Biblically based truths that were often out of favor. He faced down mobs and stood up for the poor when it was unpopular to do so. Near the end of his long career, he took a stand against slavery. Hundreds of thousands of people found new life in Christ through the Methodist revival. This is what happens when people live in the resurrection.

Join me as we remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in Holy Communion. As partake of the bread, the body of Christ, and partake of the juice, the blood of Christ, we open our hearts to God’s grace so we can live within the resurrection.

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Sermon Outline

- I. You just heard the reader recite these wonderful words of Jesus, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”
 - A. Jesus spoke these words about two or three weeks before he was falsely arrested and murdered on a cross.
 - B. I imagine many of the people watching him suffer and die were shocked as they stared in disbelief.
 - After Jesus breathed his last breath and the Roman soldier pierced his side, there was no doubt that he was dead.
 - From that Friday afternoon when Jesus died and throughout the following Saturday, everyone was in bewilderment.
 - How could this man be the resurrection and the life?
- II. Then, something incredible happened on the Sunday morning after Jesus died.
 - A. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
 - So, she ran back to Peter and John, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”
 - B. Upon hearing this news, Peter and John, ran to the tomb.
 - Both were running, but John, being the younger of the two, easily outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
 - He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.
 - Then Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. (Peter usually acted first, before thinking about it.)

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- He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head.
 - The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.
 - Finally, John also went inside and confirmed what Mary had told them. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)
 - Then they went back to where they were staying.
- C. Now Mary remained at the tomb entrance, crying.
- As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.
 - They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”
 - “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.”
 - At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.
 - He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”
 - Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”
 - Jesus said to her, “Mary.”
 - She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).
 - Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

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- Mary Magdalene sprinted to the disciples with the glorious news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.
- D. That Sunday evening, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”
- After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
 - Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”
 - And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
 - Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.
 - So, the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”
 - But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
- E. A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them.
- Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”
 - Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”
 - Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
- F. Jesus Christ rose from the dead! He is the resurrection and the life!!! Glory Hallelujah!!

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III. Right from the beginning, many people found it very difficult to accept the resurrection of Jesus. They just couldn't understand it.

A. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...”

B. To many of the Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was a stumbling block.

- During my first trip to Israel, I was part of a large crowd of Christian pastors, and we had a Jewish guide.
- Some of the pastors asked the guide why most Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.
- He replied that many Jews have no problem following Jesus as a Messiah but cannot accept him as God in the flesh.
- So, the resurrection became a stumbling block because, as I will discuss in a few minutes, the resurrection proves Jesus' divinity.

C. To many of the Gentiles, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was foolishness.

- Around the end of the first century, the Roman historian, Tacitus, described the resurrection of Jesus as evil, hideous, and shameful.
- To understand this, we must remember that the Crucifixion was how the Romans executed slaves, murders, rebels and other disposable people.
 - Crucifixion was how the Romans got rid of the dregs of society.
 - So, if God raised from the dead someone who had been crucified, then God was raising from the dead some low-class dog of a person.
 - To the Romans, that couldn't happen because only the high-class folks deserve resurrection.

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- If God raised a crucified person, then human designations of who matters and who doesn't matter dissolves.
- Thus, Jesus' resurrection is foolishness to the Romans.

IV. So, why do we, as Christians, venerate and contemplate the resurrection of Jesus? What is the big deal? Why do we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every Sunday and make a special holiday for it?

A. The answer, surprisingly, is simple: The resurrection of Jesus proves that Jesus is worthy of our worship.

B. Follow this logic:

- The resurrection proves that Jesus conquered death on our behalf.
 - He was dead on Friday but alive on Sunday.
 - He came back to life in a glorified body that will never again die.
- The resurrection paves the way for us to receive God's forgiveness and have eternal life.
 - This is why Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20 – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
 - We are the fruit that will follow the Jesus – the first fruit of the resurrection of the dead
 - In other words, we too can look forward to the resurrection of our bodies.
 - You can read about this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-22, Romans 6:4-11, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- The resurrection proves that Jesus is fully human and fully God.
 - Only God can save us from death.

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- Since Jesus is fully human and fully Divine, He is worthy of our worship.

V. Now, we have a choice.

- A. It is a choice we must make each day.
- B. We can choose to either live within or outside the resurrection.
- C. We choose to live within the resurrection when we repent, receive God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus and offer ourselves to the loving authority of God.
- D. We live outside of the resurrection when we continue to do whatever we feel like without any regard to God’s loving authority.
 - We remain our own gods.

VI. The difference between living within and outside of the resurrection

A. Grace vs. conditional love

- To live in the resurrection means we live with grace.
 - By grace, we mean God’s unconditional (undeserved) love that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus died and then conquered death on our behalf, not because we deserve it, but because God loves us unconditionally.
 - Do you remember what Jesus said on the cross?
 - He said, “Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.”
 - Before we even knew we needed forgiveness, God decided to offer it to us.
 - We do not have to earn it, we simply receive it.
 - No matter what bad thing you may have done, God will always love you and offer you forgiveness.
 - Once we receive this forgiveness, God’s grace (God’s unconditional love that is made known to us by the Holy

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Spirit) will cleanse our hearts of any sinful desires or attitudes and replace them with his holy love.

- You will become the awesome and loving person God created you to be.
- Here is how it works: As we walk in a relationship with the Father through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will work to change our hearts so that we can become more holy and loving like Jesus.
- Therefore, repentance must be part of receiving God’s forgiveness.
 - Repentance is the sincere desire to change and when we receive God’s forgiveness, we must expect God to change our hearts.
- To live outside of the resurrection is to live with conditional love.
 - We must earn God’s love.
 - We must be ‘good enough’ to go to heaven.
 - We must perfectly obey God’s law of love with every thought, word, and deed.
 - The more we try to be ‘good enough’ the more we realize how bad we are.
 - At some point, we just give up and believe the lie that we will never become better people.
 - This is no way to live.

B. Peace & Joy vs. Anxiety & Depression

- To live in the resurrection is to experience peace & joy, even when we suffer.
 - No matter how bad things get, we know that God is here, and that God loves us.

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- We also look forward to the resurrection while experiencing eternal life.
- So, when bad things happen, we can say, “So what!? I have eternal life!”
- This gives us peace & joy.
- To live outside the resurrection, is to experience anxiety, worry and even depression at the first hint of something bad happening.
 - If this physical life is truly the only life we have, then we have no hope if something happens to mess it up.

C. Courage vs. fear

- To live in the resurrection is to live with courage.
 - The grace, peace & joy that comes with living in the resurrection gives us courage.
 - With this courage we can always take the loving course of action and stand up for justice.
 - When we live in the resurrection, we can say, with confidence, “What do I have to be afraid of? If people kill me, I still live!!!”
 - So, we can take the necessary risks to unconditionally love people and resist oppression.
- To live outside the resurrection is to live in fear.
 - Living without God’s unconditional love brings anxiety & depression into our hearts.
 - Our thoughts automatically go to worst case scenarios and fear paralysis our lives.
 - When opportunities arise to sacrificially love others or stand up for justice, we weigh the risks and take the path of least resistance.

VII. John Wesley, the leader of the 18th century Methodist revival in England,

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- A. He experienced a moment in his life when he was outside of the resurrection.
- He was a young, Anglican Priest crossing the Atlantic to become the Chaplain for the Georgia colony.
 - A great storm arose, threatening to sink the ship.
 - John Wesley was sitting in a corner, cowering in fear – afraid to die.
 - A group of Moravian Christians were also on the ship. But, instead of cowering in fear, they were calmly and joyfully singing hymns.
 - After the storm, Wesley realized that the Moravians were demonstrating faith while he demonstrated a lack of faith.
 - He discovered that he was not living in the resurrection.
 - When Wesley returned from his failed ministry in Georgia, he still felt outside of the resurrection.
 - He was miserable and questioned his faith.
 - He wrote in his diary, “I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? Who will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'”
- B. Then, on May 24, 1738 he began to live in the resurrection.
- He went to a Bible study that night on Aldersgate street.
 - His soul was troubled, and he did not feel like going, but he still went.
 - Then, when the facilitator was reading Martin Luther’s preface to his commentary on Romans, Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed.

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- He wrote in his diary, “In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”
- This became known as John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience.
- From this point on, Wesley lived in the resurrection. He constantly lived with God’s grace.
 - With this grace, Wesley overcame the power of sin and sought to love all people.
 - He also enjoyed the peace and joy that comes with God’s grace.
 - With peace and joy, Wesley exhibited courage.
 - He preached Biblically based truths that were often out of favor.
 - He faced down mobs and stood up for the poor when it was unpopular to do so.
 - Near the end of his long career, he took a stand against slavery.
 - Hundreds of thousands of people found new life in Christ through the Methodist revival.
 - This is what happens when people live in the resurrection.

VIII. Join me as we remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in Holy Communion.

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- A. As partake of the bread, the body of Christ, and partake of the juice, the blood of Christ, we open our hearts to God’s grace so we can live within the resurrection.