

Aloha! Happy Easter! Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed! I am Sunny Ahn, the Senior Pastor at Kona United Methodist Church on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am glad that you are worshiping with us, especially on this Easter Sunday, from wherever you are and whatever time zone you are in right now. Welcome to Kona United Methodist Church online worship.

Today we come to the final image of our Savior upon the Cross—Christus Victor, or “Christ the Victor!” As we have sung one of the greatest Easter hymns, “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” earlier in this service, the “Alleluia” of Easter became the basis for the Christus Victor image of Christ’s death and resurrection.

This image immediately conjures up the feelings of triumphant euphoria that are embedded in our competitive and sporting culture. The old *ABC’s Wide World of Sports* television program began with the iconic words, “The thrill of victory...and the agony of defeat.” Christus Victor is built on that same dichotomy: even though sin defeats us and fills us with agony, Jesus raises us up in victory and enables us to feel the thrill of new life.

In his book “What was God doing on the cross?” Theologian Alister McGrath told about American soldiers imprisoned in a Japanese war camp in World War II.¹ One day they overheard news on a nearby radio that the Allied forces had won, and it would just be a matter of time before they would be freed from that camp. It was great news, and they quickly discovered that they began to smile and laugh even though their immediate surroundings had not yet changed. They were still imprisoned. Their captors were still in charge. For the time being, they realized a complete change in their disposition and their outlook. They sang songs and joined together in joy. Because victory had been secured for them, they were able to live victoriously even in the continued face of their suffering.

That’s the power that many people have discovered in their embrace of this “Christus Victor” atonement. Even Apostle Paul explains the work of Jesus upon the Cross to the Colossian Church using the Christus Victor image (vs. 15). When Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities, He exposed them to public disgrace by

¹ McGrath, A. (2003). *What was God doing on the Cross?* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

leading them in a triumphal parade. Paul understood those rulers and authorities were not of military or politics, but the powers of sin and death that had been defeated and then paraded for all the Cosmos to see and celebrate.

This understanding of Savior, Christus Victor, inspired Charles Wesley to write this powerful verse of his famous Easter hymn, “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”—*Love’s redeeming work is done. Fought the fight, the battle won. Death in vain forbids him rise. Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!*

Christus Victor doesn’t mean just for our Savior’s victory over sin. It means our victorious Savior guarantees victory for us over everything that has kept us defeated. This is the essence of Christus Victor, and this is the power of the resurrection.

The only question that remains is this: Will you receive the power of that victory and begin to live into the freedom that Jesus has won for you? Now that you are free in Christ, will you act free in Christ responsibly? The choice is yours. Amen.