

Easter 2021

“He is Risen!”

“He is Risen Indeed!”

Eastern Orthodox Church traces it back to Mary Magdalene...

Matthew 28:5-6

Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn’t here! **He is risen** from the dead, just as he said would happen.

Luke 24:34 **“The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”**

I wonder, “What does this phrase really mean to You?”

- *Religious tradition?*
- *A historical fact and proof that validates Christian faith?*
- *An amazing miracle that Jesus performed proving He was who He said He was?*

Those are all legitimate reasons...but they fall short of what I believe the sentiment is meant to convey. I would like to suggest another perspective.

Neo & Nida Aglugub (See Insert)

(1) There is No Circumstance, Trouble, Loss, Tragedy or Wound That Can Ever Destroy You

Romans 8:28, 35-39

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose...

Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?...No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 17

We are pressed on every side by troubles, **but we are not crushed**. We are perplexed, but **not driven to despair**.⁹ We are hunted down, but **never abandoned by God**. We get knocked down, **but we are not destroyed**...So, we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.¹⁷ For **our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!**

(2) Your Mistakes and Your Failures Will Never Define You

(8:31, 33-34)

If God is for us, who can ever be against us...Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

John 8:36 **"If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!"**

(3) His Rising Foretells the Story of Your Rising

- Not just on the last day...Every day!
- If Death itself could not hold Jesus down...
 - Then neither will...
 - your anxiety and fear
 - your broken marriage
 - your prodigal child
 - your depression or hopelessness
 - your guilt and shame
 - your financial ruin
 - your terminal illness

...Hold You Down...

Romans 8:11

If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And **just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.**

John 16:33

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. **But take heart, because I have overcome the world.**

– And so will You!

Neo & Nida Aglugub

Brittney and I have partnered with this couple and their Ministry for 20 years

- Central figures through whom 200+ churches in the **Philippines** on the **North Island of Luzon** have thrived for many years.
- They have been a rock and a constant source of support for the pastoral couples and churches. They are selfless, tireless, cheerful, and unmovable in their faith.



2017

- Nida suffers **Kidney failure**
 - Painful dialysis...a race to find not only a **donor**, but the **funds for a transplant**.
- At roughly the same time Neo is diagnosed with **Parkinson's Disease**
 - He becomes unable to drive, and hardly able to stand without medications
 - This apostle of sorts of the Philippines, who traveled all over the island, encouraging, blessing, and connecting Christians...was now immobile

2018

- Miraculously as dialysis was keeping Nida alive, a donor was found...and the funds were found
 - Shortly after her surgery and follow-up appointments, the doctors find **Breast Cancer**
- **Typhoon** wipes out the crops and livelihoods of so many of the church's members...overwhelmed with needs...

2019

- **Monsoon** devastates another crop and harvest.
- Nida is **struggling with the many medicines** to keep her body from rejecting the new kidney and the cancer treatment.
- Nida, while holding her grandson, is **struck by an oncoming motorcycle (cracked skull, broken arm, broken leg...)**
- Neo's **Parkinson's worsens**.

2020

- 11/20 **Typhoon "Ulysses"** submerges the city
 - **Destroys much of Neo and Nida's home and possessions**
- Members of their church at Larion were lost in the flooding
- **Pandemic Surges**

2021

- Oldest Daughter's **Husband leaves her and 3 children** for another woman - devastating

Brother Lee,

*I need your prayers. I struggle physically every day... My Parkinson's disease is progressing. The medicines I am taking is effective only within 2 to 3 hours. I am now taking 4 times daily. I could hardly walk if the effect of the medicine expires. I cannot drive anymore. I miss my social obligations but I am still functional. I have limited mobility. Most of the time I am confined here at home. **How I wish you are here to pour out my heart. Sometimes I am hard up, depressed and suicidal thoughts come to me.***

But I am fighting and praying very hard and continue trusting God. I know He will not forsake me...We have a loving and caring God to depend on. Be strong brother. We know that we are securely in the palm of His hand. He is stronger than any storm that shakes us. As we lean more on Him, we are more strengthened in the Faith.

Your Friend and Brother,

Neo