

Jesus Changes Everything

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Introduction: What if it isn't true?

What if Jesus wasn't really raised from the dead?

What if He was crucified, buried, and that was it?

If Jesus wasn't really raised from the dead, what are we doing here this morning? Why gather? Why sing? Why pray? Why preach?

The Apostle Paul understood that the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the lynchpin of the Christian faith. Without it, there is no Christian faith. If Christ has not been raised, this is all a waste. But if Christ has been raised, everything changes.

Turn with me in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul makes this argument. You can find it beginning on page 903 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave. 1 Corinthians 15. We're going to be focusing our attention on verses 12-20, but I want you to be able to see the argument that Paul is making here, so I'm going to read verses 1-20. 1 Corinthians 15:1-20.

(Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-20...Pray)

The issue in first century Corinth was that some within the Corinthian Church were saying that there is no resurrection of the dead. Look at verse 12. (Read vs. 12)

They had heard Paul preach the message of the gospel rooted in the resurrection of Christ. They had heard others preach the resurrected Jesus. They had even received the gospel as it had been proclaimed. Yet some of them were saying that there is no resurrection of the dead.

And Paul says, "This doesn't add up." You cannot say that you believe Jesus was raised from the grave, then turn around and deny that the dead can be raised. To deny the resurrection of the dead generally, is to deny the resurrection of Christ specifically.

And in light of all that Paul has already said in the chapter about the absolute necessity of the resurrection of Jesus to the gospel message, denying the resurrection of the dead has disastrous consequences both theologically and practically.

So, Paul tells the Corinthians the logical result of their position. Look at verse 13. (Read vs. 13)

The logic here is not difficult. Paul is abundantly clear. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. It's interesting because it seems like the Corinthians did not necessarily deny the resurrection of Jesus. They may have reasoned that it was a unique occurrence that had no bearing on others who died. But Paul says that such a position is logically inconsistent. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

So, Paul shows the Corinthians that **Jesus is alive, and that changes everything.**

But he begins by arguing from the negative. He lists for the Corinthians, and us, the logical results of no resurrection. He says...

I. If Christ has not been raised, this is all a waste (vs. 12-19).

I wonder if you understand that this morning. If Christ has not been raised, this is all a waste.

A. In fact, if Christ has not been raised, our gospel is pointless (vs. 14).

- 1. Look at verse 14. (Read vs. 14)**
- 2. If Christ has not been raised, all is vanity.**
- 3. He says, "Our preaching is in vain." It's meaningless. It's empty.**
- 4. Think about that for a minute. You're going to sit here for about 30 minutes and listen to me preach on 1 Corinthians 15. I'm going to tell you that you were far from God because of your sin. That God sent His Son Jesus to come to this earth, live a sinless life, and die on the cross to pay for your sin. That if you would turn**

from your sin and place your trust in Jesus, you will be saved. But that message is meaningless. It's empty. If Christ has not been raised.

5. See, Paul says not only that our preaching is in vain, but also that our "faith is in vain."
6. When I was 8 years old, I sat down with my pastor. His name is Richard Welch. And Pastor Richard shared with me the message of the gospel. I had grown up in church. I had grown up in a Christian home. I had heard the message of the gospel many times. But it was then, while talking with Pastor Richard, that I understood my sin and my need for a Savior. I understood that, despite my sin, God had made a way for me to be made right with Him through the life and death of Jesus. And I confessed my sin to God and asked Him to forgive me of my sin and save me. And since that day, I've been a follower of Jesus. Not perfectly. But truly. It hasn't always been easy. I've had my doubts. I've had my struggles. But Jesus has held me as His own.
7. Do you see, Goshen, that if Christ has not been raised, all of that is vanity? It's empty. It's meaningless. It's a waste. If Christ has not been raised.

B. Not only that, Paul says that our witness is false (vs. 15).

1. Look at verse 15. (Read vs. 15)
2. Have you ever told someone about the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
3. I hope you have, mom or dad. I hope you've gathered your children and shared with them that the Lord Jesus was crucified to pay for their sin, and three days later He was raised from the dead. So that if they would turn from their sin and place their trust in Jesus, they will be made right with God and be given the promise of eternal life with God in heaven.
4. I hope you have, grandparent. I hope you have, Sunday School teacher. I hope you have, follower of Jesus. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that we are "ambassadors for Christ." God makes His appeal through us. We

proclaim the message of the gospel, including the resurrection of Jesus, and we implore people to be reconciled to God.

5. I love Paul's succinct presentation of the gospel in verses 3-4 of 1 Corinthians 15. (Read vs. 3-4)
6. But what if Christ has not been raised? Our witness is false. "We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised."

C. Paul also says that our faith is futile (vs. 17).

1. Look at verse 17. (Read vs. 17)
2. This is similar to Paul's statement that all is vanity.
3. Maybe we can make a slight distinction here. Where "vain" has the idea of lacking in reality or content, "futile" carries the idea of wanting in result, fruitless, to no effect.
4. Paul says that not only is your faith meaningless if Christ has not been raised, but it produces no real salvation because there is no salvation to be had if Christ is not raised.
5. What then is the result? The Corinthians were still in their sins. We are still in our sins.
6. This morning we sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." But what if He is not risen? We sang, "Love's redeeming work is done. Fought the fight the battle won. Death in vain forbids Him rise. Christ hath opened paradise." Do you realize that none of that is true if Christ has not been raised?
7. Your faith in Christ is futile if He has not been raised.
8. If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sin. You are still far from God because of your sin. You will still be required to pay the penalty for your sin in hell forever. If Christ has not been raised.
9. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

D. And sadly, our dead are gone (vs. 18).

1. Look at verse 18. (Read vs. 18)

2. **The Bible says that for those who are in Christ, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But if Christ has not been raised, that's not true. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have simply perished.**
3. **Earlier this year, we had the sad experience of burying some of our most beloved and faithful members. It's always hard when we lose those we love. Death is never easy. But our hope for these beloved members, as Christians, was and is that we will see them again. That death for the believer is not goodbye.**
4. **But if Christ has not been raised, that's not true. If Christ has not been raised, we won't see them again. Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. They've merely returned to the ground. And that's the end. If Christ has not been raised.**

E. Goshen, if Christ has not been raised, **our lives are pitiful (vs. 19).**

1. **Look at verse 19. (Read vs. 19)**
2. **Think about that. You've heard of Pascale's Wager. It's a form of hedging your bet when it comes to God. Pascale said that it is more rational to believe in God than not to, because if God exists, the believer gains eternal reward, and if not, they lose little.**
3. **Paul says exactly the opposite here in 1 Corinthians 15. "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."**
4. **Think about that for a minute. If you attend church just for one hour most Sundays every year for 75 years, you will spend over 3,750 hours in church over the course of your life. That's over 156 days of your life spent in church if you just come one hour a week. If you come for Sunday School too, you can double it. 312 days. Almost a whole year. If you come on Wednesday night, now you're up to 468 days. And some of you spend a lot more than 3 hours a week here worshipping and serving the Lord. Do you realize how much time you're wasting every week if Christ has not been raised?**

5. **Do you see why Paul says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied"?**
6. **If we're truly living for Christ, our lives are pitiful if Christ has not been raised. We've wasted a lot of time, money, energy, and much more.**
7. **If Christ has not been raised, the rest of the world has it right. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die. Live for the weekend. Seek as much pleasure as you can. Gratify your flesh. Do what feels good. If Christ has not been raised, that makes perfect sense.**
8. **Living for Jesus is foolish. It's pitiful. It's all a waste. If Christ has not been raised.**

II. **BUT in fact, Christ has been raised (vs. 20).**

Look at verse 20. (Read vs. 20)

A. **Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. He was buried. And three days later, He was raised from the dead.**

1. **Matthew writes in his Gospel, "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay" (Matt. 28:1-6).**
2. **When the women went to the tomb early Sunday morning, Jesus was not there. He had been raised from the dead!**
3. **See, if you are going to deny the resurrection of Jesus, you need an explanation for how Jesus who was buried in a tomb on Friday wasn't there on Sunday when the women arrived at the tomb.**

- a. How did the tomb where Jesus was buried become empty?
- b. Dead men don't just get up and walk out of a tomb on their own.
- c. The disciples didn't steal the body. Most of them died for their faith in the resurrected Jesus. People do not die for something they know to be a lie.
- d. The best explanation for the empty tomb is that there was a resurrection.
- e. And that is the explanation to which the Bible testifies.

B. Here in 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul compiles some of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. He lists six resurrection appearances.

1. First was Cephas (or Peter) (vs. 5a). First of the twelve to see the empty tomb.
2. Then Jesus appeared to the twelve (vs. 5b). At one time.
3. Then to more than 500 brothers at one time (vs. 6).
 - a. Now, that's significant because we might think it possible for 1 or 2 people to think they saw the resurrected Jesus even if they didn't really see Him.
 - b. We might even be able to imagine 12 people thinking they saw the resurrected Jesus.
 - c. But Paul says that over 500 people saw the resurrected Jesus at one time.
 - d. Not hallucination. Hallucination is not a group phenomenon.
 - e. In fact, Paul says to the Corinthians in that day, "Many of them are still alive. If you don't believe me, go and ask them."
4. Then the resurrected Jesus appeared to James, Paul says (vs. 7a). Likely the half-brother of Jesus.
5. Then to all the apostles (vs. 7b). We know that the four Gospels record various resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples.
6. And finally, to Paul (vs. 8).

C. Goshen, the evidence that Jesus really is alive is compelling.

1. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the strongest argument Christianity has for its authenticity.
2. Consider that reasonable scholars (even secular scholars) accept some basic facts.
 - a. There really was a man named Jesus from Nazareth.
 - b. He really was crucified.
 - c. His followers really did believe that He had been resurrected and went around proclaiming that message.
 - d. Many of them lost their lives proclaiming that message.
 - e. You have to decide what to do with these facts.
 - f. The most obvious explanation is that Jesus really was raised from the dead.
3. He was crucified to pay for your sin and mine. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. And then three days later, He got up from the grave. Demonstrating His power over death, hell, and the grave once and for all.

If Christ has not been raised, this is all a waste. BUT in fact, Christ has been raised! And...

III. Because Christ has been raised, everything changes (vs. 12-19).

- A. In fact, because Christ has been raised, our lives have meaning (vs. 19).**
1. Paul says in verse 19 that if Christ has not been raised, we are of all people most to be pitied.
 2. But understand this morning that the inverse is also true. Because Christ has been raised, our lives have meaning.

3. **Your time here this morning is not a waste. The time and energy that you devote to worshiping and serving the Lord is not wasted. When you give of your resources to the Lord through His church, you are investing in eternity. It's not a waste!**
4. **You waste your life by ignoring the Lord. You waste your life by living as if this life is all that there is. Sure, there may be some temporary pleasure. But the things of this world can never provide you with the eternal joy and satisfaction you crave. That's only found in Jesus. It's only found in following and serving and worshiping Him. That's where meaning is found! In Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the grave!**

B. And because Jesus was raised from the dead, we have confidence that our dead will be raised (vs. 18).

1. **Paul says in verse 18 that if Christ has not been raised, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**
2. **But Christ has been raised. Death is not the end. This life is not all that there is.**
3. **Hear the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep....¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).**
4. **Because Jesus is alive, our dead will be raised!**
5. **It's why we can stand over the grave of a loved one and declare with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"**

C. See, because Jesus is alive, our faith is infinitely valuable (vs. 17).

1. **Paul says in verse 17 that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins.**
2. **But Christ has been raised! And if you are in Christ, your faith is not futile. You are not still in your sins. You've been delivered from your sin by the blood of Jesus which was shed on Calvary's cross for you.**
3. **Now, if you are not in Christ, it is true that you are still in your sins. But I'm here to tell you this morning that you don't have to remain there. You can turn from your sin, place your trust in Jesus, and be delivered from your sin. All because Jesus is alive!**

D. And church, because Christ has been raised, our witness is true (vs. 15).

1. **Paul writes in verse 15 that if Christ has not been raised, we are guilty of misrepresenting God because we have testified that He raised Christ.**
2. **But since Christ has been raised, our testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus is true!**
3. **Parents, grandparents, Sunday School teachers, followers of Jesus. When you share about the resurrected Jesus, you are not perpetuating a myth. You are speaking of the greatest miracle to ever take place. You are testifying to the truth that Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead.**
4. **Our witness is true.**

E. And our gospel is good news (vs. 14).

1. **If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain and our faith is in vain. It's meaningless.**
2. **But since Christ has been raised, our preaching is not in vain. Our faith is not in vain. Our gospel is good news for all who will turn from their sin and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
3. **See, here's the deal... (Share the gospel)**

Conclusion: So, let me bring us back where we started this morning.

What if it isn't true?

What if Jesus wasn't really raised from the dead?

If that were the case, then Paul is right. This is all a waste.

- Our gospel is pointless.
- Our witness is false.
- Our faith is futile.
- Our dead are gone.
- Our lives are pitiful.

BUT in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

And because Christ has been raised, everything changes.

- Our lives have meaning.
- Our dead will be raised.
- Our faith is infinitely valuable.
- Our witness is true.
- Our gospel is good news.

Jesus changes everything.

What about you? What about your life? Has Jesus changed everything for you?

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus...

If you are a follower of Jesus, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Jesus changes everything.