

Raised

Acts 17:30–31; Romans 6:4; Colossians 3:1–3

I am glad you joined God's people to celebrate the certain hope that we have in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is interesting that as our culture has significantly secularized, knowledge of God's Word and history has vanished. It may now be the majority of people believe that Christ's resurrection is something of a fairytale — a make-believe event. Or that any call to believe in Christ is a call to a blind leap of faith, something along the lines of Santa Claus.

God's word does indeed call us to trust Christ, but God does not call us to blind leaps. He has written the plain evidence that he is into creation. In a much more specific way, the Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection are eyewitness testimony recorded by careful historians. Those records include the gospel writers but are not limited to them. Roman and Greek historians record the life, death, and evident resurrection of Christ in their writings.

We are not called to “make believe” in Christ. Christ's life and work are objective truth. That is part of the reason we read all of 1 Corinthians 15 for the Call to Worship. There the apostle noted hundreds of eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection. The Gospels, the book of Acts, and other places in the New Testament document vivid, life-changing eyewitness accounts of the risen Christ following his crucifixion and burial. We are called to **believe** what he said he **accomplished** through those events, which is that he paid the wages of sin and the freed from the bondage of sin those who trust him — so that they may have his eternal life. We are to trust that he has finished the work that fully frees us from sin and the death it brings.

As we look at what it means for us that Christ was raised from the dead, I'm going to approach it from two categories. First, **What does the resurrection of Christ from the dead mean for those who have not come to trust Christ.** That is, those who live apart from him as though he doesn't exist, in spite of the evidence — Or those who don't care that he exists so that they can continue to pursue whatever they like. The second category is **What the resurrection means for those who are trusting Christ**, who live their lives under the rule and reign of Jesus, the eternal King. For believers, we will look first at what it means in the future, and then what it means in the here and now. This is incredibly consequential for all of us. We need God's help. Let's ask him for it. **PRAY** with me.

2

What does the resurrection of Jesus from the dead mean for those who have not trusted him?

It is common in this day for people to have no little or no awareness of the statements God makes in his Word about Christ. Let's begin with a 30,000 ft view of how we got here. God created us for communion with him. Because he is holy and perfect, he our first parents in the Garden that if they rebelled and violated his life-giving command, they would die. Rebellion rose up in them, and they rebelled right at the start. We've continued the family tradition, and we've been dying ever since. The Bible teaches that physical death here does not end our existence. It just sends us on to the final judgment. Now, Christ's rising from the dead points to **that** judgment. (In a sense, we are getting the very bad news out of the way first so that we can have great news over the next several minutes.)

Let's see that spelled out in **Acts 17:30–31**. The Apostle Paul is speaking here to religious people, but their religions are rooted in false beliefs about God, and so are worthless. Paul leads them to the only true God who undertook to kill what was killing us. Follow as I read. **Acts 17:30–31 — The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.**

Let's work that from the back to the front. **First**, God has raised Jesus from the dead. **Second**, his resurrection assures of something. What is it that we are assured of? God has fixed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed. Jesus is the man that Paul refers to there. So we **must** know that the day of righteous judgment by Christ has been fixed, and his resurrection assures us of this. He is the Judge. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body.¹

Third, his resurrection ushers in a call to turn from what kills us, which is sin. He commands all people everywhere to repent. To **repent** means to turn from rebellion against God — which rebellion produces death, and surrender and submit to Christ, which gives eternal life! We must know this, too! This is life-giving news! If you are outside of Christ this morning, his resurrection assures you that you are headed to a face-to-face encounter with him, and you will be judged according to his perfect righteousness. There is no sliding scale. But this is a sweet call of **grace**, this call to turn from rebellion and surrender yourself to his kind and merciful reign. I will come back to that in a minute.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:10

3

What does the resurrection of Jesus from the dead mean for those who *have* trusted him?

As I said, Jesus came to kill what was killing us. The wages for sin — what we earn for every sin is death.² Those who sin die — unless they have a substitute die in their place. Jesus came on rescue mission to die as a substitute to pay for sin and free from sin. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.³ Make no mistake: sin does kill. But Christ, the substitute sin bearer bore the death penalty for those who will trust him. Forgiveness of sin and victory over death comes through his victorious defeat of death. In Romans 5, death is personified as a tyrannical dark dictator, enslaving us to death-producing sin. Jesus is the destroyer of death and destruction. Tyranny and enslavement to sin is crushed. Those who enter Christ through faith likewise gain his victory.

Our resurrection to eternal life was secured by his resurrection to eternal life. As we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.⁴ Our resurrection to eternal life in Christ will be in a new body like his, fashioned without the brokenness and corruption of the body that we live in while we walk in this broken in corrupt world.⁵ We read that in **1 Corinthians 15** in the Call to Worship. This is the glorious future for believers.

When we think about his resurrection, we may be prone to simply think about the future benefits of it. We've looked at the future for those outside of Christ: his resurrection assures us that a future judgment that is coming. For believers we look at a future when Christ has absorbed our judgment and penalty on the cross so that we will live forever. But the resurrection has tremendous ramifications for us as we sit here this morning, and as we go about our routine tomorrow morning. Let's now look at what Christ's resurrection means for us in the here and now.

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for Christians right now?

His resurrection means purpose and mission which determines how you spend your next heartbeat. **Romans 6:4** (which was part of our memory work this morning) — **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.** Newness of life means a life that has been set free from the grip and chains of sin. Apart from Christ, without his resurrection, what we pursue are things we hope will satisfy us, but cannot. We are made to be satisfied in God, not created things. But

² Romans 6:23

³ Romans 4:25

⁴ Romans 6:5

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:50–55

4

we grasp for substitutes for God because we are chained in sin. We are blind and deaf to God who alone truly gives life. So through Christ's resurrection, we walk in newness of life — a new life that can see and value what is truly meaningful and satisfying — that is God and his Kingdom.

Jesus tells the parable about a merchant of pearls. He spent his life, his career, looking at countless pearls, trading in them, hoping that one day he would find one that was truly valuable. Then Jesus says he finally found the Pearl of Great Price. It was the ultimate — the pearl that made all the rest look like garbage in comparison. When the merchant found that pearl of unparalleled beauty and surpassing value, he sold everything. He is sold out; he went all in to gain the pearl of great price. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is that pearl, and he is the king of the kingdom. Newness of life gives us capacity to see the pearl we could not see and value before. Newness of life is desiring what is of ultimate worth rather than chasing what is passing, fading, corrupt, and dying.

Newness of life is new **values**, new **pursuit**, new **thinking**, new **seeing** so that I don't squander the substance of life on what is cannot save or satisfy. Colossians 3 brings this into focus.

Colossians 3:1-3 — If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. As Christ has been raised, and we are united with Christ, we seek the eternal things of our King — not the dusty decaying World and culture that is under the curse of sin. Resurrection people live daily in a dying world with our minds and hearts focused on our Risen Lord and his Kingdom. This is all vaporous and passing. He is seated and unchanging. That must drive every expenditure of our short lives. 80¢ versus 80 billion dollars. Would it not be foolish to be captivated by 80¢ and never think about how to invest and manage 80 billion dollars? Would it not, likewise, be foolish to spend 80 years on yourself in a passing world when you are going to spend 900 trillion years in eternity with the unchanging, ruling King of Creation? If you have been raised with Christ, set your mind on his things above. His Kingdom alone is of ultimate consequence. Newness of life lays hold to the consequential.

How is resurrection power at work in your life? Are you set free from the tyranny of pursuing one more worthless thing that promises what it can't deliver? Is your hope for eternal life tied to the only one who has ever defeated death? Perhaps even this morning, there is an awareness that the controlling reality of Christ's resurrection is not shaping all that you pursue. He is the pearl of great price. Sell out and lay hold of him who lives forever!

5

Let the resurrection shape how you expend your life. Don't be molded by the vaporous, the passing. What are you chasing that will stay with you when the last breath leaves your lungs? Well, the only thing that won't leave you when your body quits is the eternal king and his eternal kingdom. The life-giving, sin-smashing power of Christ's resurrection is available to all who turn to him in faith. But all the Christ has done as a substitute sin-bearer, as a death-conquering Champion, as a new-life-giving Lord — all that he has done remains of no benefit to me if I remain outside of Christ.

The resurrection is a call to everyone everywhere to turn from sin and death to life in Christ — a clean, empowered life that lays hold of what God made us for. We are called to turn to him and live, trusting in his cleansing blood shed on the cross. He paid the price. "Doing better," or being a good person — what foolishness to attempt what only Christ can do. We might do some nice things on occasion, but no amount of nice things will erase our death penalty.

In **John 11:25–26**, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Trust his sin-cleansing work and his resurrection power and escape the death sin produces,

From an intellectual perspective, it is so simple a small child can understand it. Look away from yourself, and give up any confidence in your ability to make yourself good or live righteously before God, and look to Christ the perfect holy sacrifice. Look away from yourself to Christ and live.

It's not hard to understand. The battle begins with repentance. I must turn from living as though I am lord of my life and bow my knee before Christ. My rebellious sinful nature hates that. What we must come to grips with is that our rebellion produces death. Life is only in Christ. The call to turn to him is a call to life. The only thing we lose is what kills us. Today is the day of grace. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day that we are reminded that God has raised Jesus from the dead, the eternal Lord and King. He is risen, and this is our call from sin and self. Come to Christ and live!

PRAY