

## **We preach Christ Resurrected**

*I Corinthians 15:1-19*

It's great to see all of you here this morning...we are glad you have joined us in the celebration of Jesus Christ defeating death through His great resurrection... It's already been a great morning together... and we will continue in this celebration all the way to the Lord's table.

If you are with us for the first time welcome... if this is your first time to be in church... we're glad you are here!...come back next week for the second coming of Jesus Christ...probably not literally but maybe... we'll be in Revelation 19.

A couple who **only** attends church on Easter Sunday every year noticed that we sing the same songs every year... *Up from the Grave He Arose...Christ the Lord is Risen Today...*

They said *Every time we come to church you sing the same songs!...“Are those the only songs this church knows?...well if you only come once a year!*

*Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!*

*Foll'wing our exalted Head, Alleluia!*

*Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!*

2 Corinthians 5:8

**8 we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

[Ron Jones]

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We can have differences in many areas of theology...our understanding about God and His Son Jesus Christ...how we interpret, understand the Bible...

order of Salvation...Eschatology—End times...The doctrine of man and sin... depravity... Ecclesiology—doctrine of the church, how we are to worship... Baptism... baby's or believers... the list goes on...

Some call these second, third or fourth tier issues... as Christians we can disagree on some of intricacies of these things and still see each other in heaven...this bothers some but when we *all* get to heaven...there will be some Arminians there, a few Calvinists...Methodists... Presbyterians Baptists...premillennialist... amillennials.....post -Millennials

Those who believe in a rapture...and we will eventually see those who don't...**BUT WE WILL ALL HAVE THIS IN COMMON...** we all believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

There is one essential, non-negotiable doctrine all of Christianity stands on and must stand on—**the essential elements of the gospel of Jesus Christ**....Romans 10:9 **If you confess** (admitting what is true in your life) **with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**... you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

It all comes down to the fundamentals of faith.... After all the arguing is over... it's the fundamentals that are crucial...I love what Norman Geisler said years ago... *I've got a fundamental question to ask you...if the fundamentals of the fundamentals isn't fundamental, what's fundamental is nothing!*

The foundation of everything we believe in as Christians is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ...the fundamental truth is that **Jesus died for our sins... He was buried... and He was resurrected from death**... ]

Jesus Christ died....that is history

Jesus Christ died for our sins...that is doctrine.

Jesus Christ rose again...that is validation!...and much more... victory over death.

This morning I want us to look at the beginning of the longest passage in the Bible regarding the most important event in the Bible... the resurrection of Jesus Christ...the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church... his first letter... 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 15...but first... something he wrote in his second letter...

[I want to look at this because if Paul is right... that it is essential to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ... **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**...we might need some convincing if we are honest with ourselves...Resurrection is something SUPER-NATURAL... outside of what is normal...

In simplistic term...*resurrection is the action or fact of restoring a dead person to life*....we who've been in the church for awhile say that so easily... Jesus died then came back to life... it's easy to become immune to just how “fantastic” that really is...

The mere fact that we “preach” about this is more nuanced than we might realize...

The apostle Paul in II Corinthians chapter 4 says to the Corinthians.... **We do not preach ourselves.... But Christ Jesus as Lord.... And ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake.**

**We preach Christ**... yes... Paul is declaring that his purpose in his *preaching* is *not* to elevate himself.... Not to make the focus himself... that is not the subject of his preaching

But rather the center of Paul's preaching.... The subject...the entire focus of... is Jesus Christ... yes... that is what he is saying... BUT... it's even deeper than that when you consider what "preach" means..... **we preach Christ...**

To preach two thousand years ago meant something different than it does today...today when you start to lecture your spouse their response might be something like.... *Quit preaching to me*...preaching is a lecture...but it comes from a unique Greek word [Key-rees-so] *Kerysso*... it is a different word than "to *teach...lecture*"... or to *philosophize* ... or to hand out some *wisdom*....

Today we think of preaching as lecturing us on how to live...someone trying to convict others of their wayward lives and try to convince them to turn around... a preacher is someone trying to convince others to embrace a religion.... not so in the days of the Apostle Paul....

The word means "a *herald*".... One who delivers the **news**... not a deliverer of editorials...opinions... as are most news people today.... But NEWS...real news... the announcing of actual events that have happened in that day...Webster defines news as *new information or a report about something that has happened recently....* **Something that ACTUALLY HAPPENED!**

A "herald" was the news media of the day... no TV, internet...no Newspapers...no news podcasts...just these people whose job it was to go from town to town and cry out the events of the day....It was the person who would post notices on the community board telling of the actual *events* that are going on elsewhere...they reported **only the important news.**

News that would affect people's lives...not fluff news...but a battle breaking out in a neighboring town... a raise in the Roman Taxes on Israel... the announcement of a new territorial governor... only the relevant life affecting news... no frivolous human interest stories....

*So get into this...* when the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians that "**we don't 'preach' ourselves..... we preach Christ**"....he's simply saying... *we are not news... but Jesus Christ IS the news... He is someone relevant to your lives...He is real... He is actual information that will affect you....*

Our passage today in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15 starts out:

### **Read verse 1a**

*I am telling you some news that is very relevant to your lives... the gospel...* and what is the gospel?..... GOOD NEWS.... I'M PREACHING...Hard news.... But it is GOOD hard news.... SOME GOOD NEWS.

The reason I want us to see this is because what Easter really is... in fact what Christianity really is... **is an announcement of vital actual historical events**... that's the way Christianity was

presented to the people back two thousand years ago... not a philosophy... or a way to live your life... or a mindset to get your mind in...or even a new religion...

But what Christianity... and Easter really is... is a reporting of actual historical events.... In Paul's day.... To listen to him "***preach the gospel***" then say something like.... *I don't buy it... that's not for me*... would have been the same as today saying *I don't buy the idea of Abraham Lincoln ever being president of the United States.... Or that we ever landed on the moon...you can choose not to believe actual events!....* but that would be foolish.

This is one reason why Christianity is so very different than all other religions... other religions say... *Here's a way to make your lives better... Here's a way to get wisdom.... Here's a way to alter your mind to another more blissful state....Here's a way you can relate to God...*

Christianity says this.....

### **Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-8**

How's that sound?...it sounds like news reporting....Those are chronological facts regarding an event that took place... something actually happened... something that has happened and changes everything.... That's what Christianity is.... That's what Easter is...

We are first deliverers of good news!.... and because of that good news.... Because of those actual historical events.... THEN lives.... Your lives are changed.... Then the philosophy... the wisdom... you have to first embrace the reality of the event....

Really!... Paul tells us here in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15.... That in order for the Christian message to have any power in your life.... In order for it to transform your life... in order for it to truly be any Good News... the resurrection of Jesus Christ **MUST BE EMBRACED AS A HISTORICAL EVENT THAT REALLY HAPPENED!**...it's true

Before you may be at peace with God.... Before you can have the assurance of your salvation... before you have the power of the Holy Spirit richly dwelling inside of you... you must first embrace the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a fact....

Romans 10:9... **if you confess with your mouth... Jesus as Lord... and believe in your heart what?...believe what?...a true event..... that God raised Him from the dead.... The resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

***Belief in the resurrection doesn't necessarily make you a Christian...but if you don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.... You cannot be a Christian!***

Now... this book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians...chapter 15 is the largest, longest and most detailed account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ... it was written before any of the gospels....probably 20 years after the resurrection... so there are a lot of people alive who were alive at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection that were hearing these words of Paul's....

And what we see... is that the Christians of that day were absolutely convinced of the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ... they didn't question any of that...they were confident in the historical evidence and facts....

The problem the Corinthians were having was NOT in believing Jesus was resurrected... but rather they too would be resurrected after they died...a philosophy had entered into their culture that said when you died... only your soul would continue on... that is why Paul writes chapter 15... to show them that because Jesus actually died then rose on the third day...**BODILY RESURRECTED**... each one of us who are Christians will also be **BODILY** resurrected.

### **Read 1b**

You believed in the gospel... you believed in the resurrection of Christ... you stand on that... you are saved as a result of that....

### **Read Verse 2**

**Acts 26**... something very interesting popped out as I revisited it this last week... Paul is in prison... The Jewish leaders had brought charges against Paul for his Christian beliefs...heresy... Festus was then acting King of the region... a visiting King, Agrippa happened to be in town when Festus decided to hear Paul's defense...

Festus invites Agrippa to hear Paul and his defense...

So the two kings, Festus and Agrippa had Paul come out and explain and defend his Christian faith...Paul begins by talking about the gospel.... The good news of Jesus Christ... he talks about the death of Jesus... the resurrection of Jesus....

Listen to this:

### **Read Acts 26:22-24**

*A resurrected Jesus?.... are you crazy?...you've left planet earth Paul! ...Festus knew Paul was a brilliant learned man... a scholar... academically sound... but this talk of someone being raised from the dead!.....your great learning has made you mad!...*

We hear things like that today don't we?... *Jesus might have been a good teacher... but this being raised from the dead?.... have you lost your mind?...*that's a fairytale.....listen to Paul's response:

### **Read Acts 26:25**

No Festus.... These things are reasonable?.... then listen to this... Paul turns to Agrippa and responds to Festus.....

### **Read Verse 26**

*For this has not been done in a corner....* What does that mean?... King Agrippa was Jewish...he lived in that region during the life of Jesus... he was there during the death and resurrection of Jesus... that's why Paul faces him.... And why he says to Festus... *the things I'm*

*saying are reasonable.... Talk to Agrippa!...he was there!...it's not that I'm crazy... isn't that right king Agrippa?*

Agrippa does respond... he doesn't say *your right, I was there I know what happened... you're so right Paul....* No... but he does say...

### **Read verse 28**

Those are huge words coming from royalty...

He knew the facts surrounding the resurrection were too hard to refute...he was there... he was a witness to all that surrounded the death and resurrection of Jesus...he heard the testimonies of the eyewitnesses... THE CHANGED LIVES... the tomb was empty!...

Jesus... His resurrection.... The facts surrounding all of Christianity **didn't happen in some corner where no one could see!...no one could verify...**

No!... the empty tomb... the resurrected Jesus was done in plain sight!.... it was never a secret... it was ALWAYS news!... verifiable news!... Jesus wasn't some guy who made up some story and tried to peddle it to gullible listeners...

No other religion is like Christianity!... all other religions...have been founded in a corner!... the founders have a secret meeting with some supreme being.... Then tries to tell everyone what to believe....

Mohamed... Buddha...every other "prophet" said the same thing.... *This happened to me...IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WHILE YOU WERE ALL SLEEPING... IN THE WILDERNESS WHEN I WAS ALL ALONE... I got this message from heaven.... Trust me...so.... Here's what you should do!.... here's a new philosophy for your life... here's a new set of standards...*

Not Jesus... not Christianity... not the Gospel... the gospel is good news... that happened **not in a corner**.... But in plain sight... verifiable!....

[Historian from years ago from Oxford.... Thomas Arnold wrote this about the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

*As a lawyer, I have made a prolonged study of the evidences and events of that first Easter day. For me, the evidence is conclusive...and over and over again in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not so nearly compelling... Inference follows on evidence...and truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect... the gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class... and as a lawyer, I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate...*

The resurrection didn't happen in a corner!.... he goes on to say...

*Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece...as carefully as every judge summing up on an important case... I have been used for many years to study the history of other times... and to examine and weigh evidence to those who have written about them... And I know of not one fact in the history of mankind which is better proved by fuller*

*evidence than the great sign that God has given us...that Christ died and rose again from the dead!]*

One way a news story can be considered as news is because there are people to verify it happened... back in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15... as Paul delivers the news... he identifies the eyewitnesses to the event....

### **Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:5**

Cephas is Peter...it's the Greek word for rock... Peter is the first... why Peter?... maybe Peter needed to see Him the most.... He had earlier denied knowing Jesus three times.... And he needed grace!... after Peter sees the risen Christ... he becomes the leader of the new Christian church.... That encounter changed his life forever....

He showed Himself to the 12.... Really it is eleven since Judas betrayed Jesus.... But this group had become known as the 12... these men since the encounter with the risen Christ...went on to lay the foundation of the church... eyewitnesses to the most important event in all of history.

### **Read 15:6**

500 eyewitnesses!.... **Jesus resurrection was not done in a corner!**... Paul says that most of those 500 were still alive at the time he penned this Corinthian letter... that's significant because if they were still alive... they could be sought out and questioned....*is it really true?*

For hundreds of years the critics have been saying that these witnesses have lied about their testimonies of seeing the risen Christ...

Amazing really... because after they really did see the risen Christ.... They became so encouraged and optimistic about the future... and that would have meant that for the rest of their lives they had to pretend to be up when actually they were devastated at His death....

They would go on the rest of their lives knowingly spreading a lie... knowing in their hearts it was all made up... and not one of them ever came clean.... *I can't do this any more.. it was all just a lie... we stole the body... we got rid of it!... we just wanted to spend the rest of our lives being tortured and then killed for something that didn't really happen!*

J.P. Moreland.... Christian Philosopher states that the number one reason people tells lies is to gain some kind of benefit or advantage...What kind of benefits did these disciples get from "telling lies" about Jesus' resurrection?

Listen to this list of "perks" Jesus' disciples got after reporting they had seen the risen Christ.... Then spent their lives following Him and "preaching the gospel"....listen to these.

James—beheaded

Philip—scourged, thrown into prison, finally crucified

Matthew—Slain with a cruel half-axe, half sword called a "Halberd Andrew"...crucified.

Bartholomew—beaten and crucified.

Peter—crucified...upside down

John—Banished to the island of Patmos....

*Over 500 people actually saw the risen Christ..... go talk to them!....* then Jesus went and appeared to:

### **Read verse 7**

Not sure which James... I think it is the half-brother of Jesus... if you remember... Jesus' brothers didn't believe He was the Messiah... James.... His own half-brother... who He surely grew up with... knew Him very well.... Didn't believe Jesus to be the Messiah....

So... I think it was this James Jesus sought out and showed His resurrected body to... we know that the resurrected Christ was the reason for James to believe in who Jesus claimed to be... for the next forty days... between the resurrection and that day when Jesus would leave earth and go to heaven...

He was seen by all these people.... Probably many more.... And to ALL the apostles....BUT... His most unusual post resurrection appearance was to the apostle Paul himself...

### **Read verse 8**

Paul was the last one.... **untimely born** is interesting... the Greek term is Ektroma... most of the time it was used as a reference to an abortion... or a miscarriage... sometimes to describe a premature birth...

In all cases.... **A life than was born unable to sustain itself**... Paul is saying... that before he met Christ on that road to Damascus... a special appearing of the resurrected Lord to Paul personally... he was as a dead baby... one with no hope ...spiritually unformed...

He came too late to be one of the 12...

### **Read verse 9**

he was persecuting the church... He knew Christ.... As a threat to his Jewish tradition... born too late because now Christ was gone!....he's like an aborted baby...an unwanted child.... but through that very special appearance...

AFTER the resurrection.... And even after the forty days and even His ascension to heaven.... Jesus comes back one more time to meet Paul ....

### **Read verse 10**

And because of Paul's meeting the resurrected Christ.... He became the greatest of the apostles... NOT BY PAUL'S ACCOUNT.... HE THOUGHT HIMSELF THE LEAST.... Writer of 13 maybe 14 of the books of the New Testament... whose writings have impacted the entire world for nearly two thousand years.

Paul didn't understand Jesus was God until he saw Him resurrected... James didn't believe Jesus to be the Messiah until he saw him resurrected... the apostles.... The twelve.... Didn't really know who Jesus was until they saw Him resurrected...

It wasn't a philosophy that changed the world... it wasn't a religion...it wasn't excellent teaching...it wasn't a way of life... it wasn't a form of meditation ... it wasn't even some instructions sent down from heaven for man to follow.... **It was news....**

It was an event... it was actual history being made!... how important was this event?... Paul tells us further down the passage...

### **Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:14-16**

If Jesus wasn't resurrected.... Then our preaching.... Our telling of the news has become fiction... not news at all.... Just a bad editorial that means nothing!...FAKE NEWS... what a waste of time and energy!

But worse than that... **this faith of ours is meaningless!**...more waste of time and energy... and it makes us ALL liars... false witnesses to God... there is no eternal life for us... no bodily resurrection... no new perfect bodies that we've been promised in scripture.... When you die you're simply dead.... Jesus died on the cross as payment for our sins...for nothing!

### **Read verses 17-18**

And that saving faith we thought we had.... GONE....we are trapped in our sins!... living the rest of our life in guilt and shame!...

And then some of the toughest words to hear....

### **Read verse 19**

Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ...we have no Savior...no good news, the gospel... no forgiveness... no meaningful faith... no life...no hope...all of the great WISDOM IN THIS GREAT BOOK... THE Bible is mostly worthless without the resurrection!....even the Old Testament?

It would be a tragedy to end this here!...what we really are waiting for is a very important word right now... a word that transitions from the dark negative to the bright light of the positive... and that word is there in the beginning of verse 20.....**BUT...**

### **Read verses 20-22**

The news is GOOD NEWS!... it isn't FAKE NEWS!.... it's real news... it is true news...

The first sermon the transformed Peter ever preached.... Recorded in Acts 2... He preached... **It was impossible for death to hold Him...** Think about the power of death for a minute...**NOTHING CAN STOP DEATH!**

No human being has ever stopped death...maybe delayed it... but never stopped it! Nothing can stop death!... The second law of thermodynamics tells us that all things eventually fall apart.... Mountains eventually are turned to sand... Stars eventually burn out... and all people eventually die.... Think of the power of death!

Yet... someone came to earth... who over-matched death!... Jesus Christ was swallowed by death... death on a cross... yet... Jesus didn't just DEFY death... He didn't just DENY death... JESUS CHRIST DESTROYED DEATH!

That's why Paul later could say... **O death... where is thy sting?...where is thy victory?**

The reason we can defeat depression.... Rid ourselves of worry.... Have a peace that surpasses all understanding... the reason we can have joy in the midst of sorrow... and hope for this world and beyond.... Is a piece of historical very good news news....

[*Life is too short to be in a bad mood...*](Stephen Bennet)

Life is too short to play games that don't bring true joy.

Life is too short to not take eternity seriously

Life is too short not to take the gospel of Jesus Christ into your heart

Martin Luther said "*The Gospel is outside of us*"... What did he mean?

- The gospel does not depend on how we feel; about ourselves or even the Christian life.
- It doesn't depend on how sorry we FEEL for what we've done in this life.
- It doesn't depend on how sincere we are or how many good things we've done.

The gospel is what Jesus did for us:

- He died for our sins
- He was buried (Important! He wasn't taken away...hidden...stolen... the Romans didn't steal away His body!
- He was raised the third day...the crucifixion means nothing had Jesus not been raised

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Theologian Gresham Machen wrote: *The great weapon with which the disciples of Jesus set out to conquer the world was not a mere comprehension of eternal principles...it was a historical message...and account of something that had actually...recently happened...it was the message HE IS RISEN!*

Jesus Christ has risen!.... He has risen indeed!

HE HAS RISEN!....HE HAS RISEN INDEED!

