

Embracing the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:1-22

The Lord is risen!...(He has risen indeed!)

Back in 1960 a very popular preacher of the day, W.E. Sangster had come down ill on Easter morning...had lost his voice... couldn't preach that day...but he wrote this note to his daughter that Easter morning...*It's terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice with which to shout "He is risen!" But it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout.*

I hope that you all wanted to shout that this morning!

I know... we say those words every year... our human sin nature is so very sad to be able make commonplace... through repetition such essential amazing absolute truth as "He is Risen"... A T U A L L Y WE SHOULD BE SAYING THAT EVERYDAY! As we rise out of bed in the morning... HE IS RISEN!

This really should be the most exciting Sunday of the year... if not the most exciting day of the year... such great hymns... *Hallelujah what a Savior...* "man of sorrows! What a name, for the Son of God who came ruined to sinners to reclaim....*Hallelujah what a Savior!*"... Jesus at the cross.

Christ Arose... "...Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes... He arose a victor from the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign...*He arose, He arose...the resurrection!*

To emphasize that... *Christ the Lord has risen today...*Sons of men and angels say: raise your joys and triumphs high...sing ye heav'ns and earth reply...*alleluia!*

[and Katlyn singing and Annie playing... *Christ is Risen...**Christ is risen, Christ is living!...dry your tears...be unafraid! Death and darkness could not hold him, nor the tomb which He lay...tell the world Christ is risen!...*]

Let me ask you a hypothetical question in a hypothetical situation... hypothetical because it is based on a false presupposition... let's say you're checking out your groceries at Safeway and on the magazine rack is a paper with the headline "*Jesus's Body Found in Ancient Tomb...*

Normally you might ignore this... headlines like that appear all the time...but This wasn't from the *National Inquirer* or *Star* or *the Globe*... this was on the front page oflet's say... *The Wall Street Journal*... a more or less reputable newspaper.

Catching your attention... you read the first paragraph... *The remains of Jesus Christ have been discovered in a newly discovered burial tomb in Jerusalem.... Through thorough testing, the skeletal remains have been positively identified as those of Jesus Christ....*[hypothetical!]

You can see the false presumption right?...Jesus's skeletal bones will never be found because they are not on earth...but let's pretend it's real...**What would your reaction be?**...What would that mean for you?... Would your reaction be...shock... fear?...Anger?...Disappointment?...

Assuming this to be true... would you still call yourself a Christian?... would you still attend church?... would you call the church office and say *You know that tithe I left...would you please send it back?!*

Would it make a big difference in your life?...after the initial surprise of reading that... Would it even really matter?... So much emphasis is placed on two events in the Life of Jesus throughout history in and out of the church...undoubtedly the biggest celebration of the year is Christmas...the birth of Jesus.... How many months are spent on Christmas?...

The other event is Jesus's death on the cross... Jesus's death on the cross is essential for Christianity to mean anything. Jesus's birth is important.... But wouldn't mean anything had Jesus not gone to the cross as a substitution for each one of us.

But... can our Christianity stand with just those two wonderful, essential events?... Can Christianity exist with any meaning... any power... any purpose or reason on just the birth and death of Jesus?....

Would the Bible still be a book for all of life?... would there be any power in God's word?...How would such news affect your life?... a little?... a lot?.... any?

I know for some... church is all about community... a place to belong... a place to feel good about life...a place for support... not so much based on "doctrine"...or "theology"... but feelings... fulfilling personal needs...and Jesus...

Jesus was so much more than Easter... so it may not matter much if the body of Jesus was found.

One pastor responding to this hypothetical said this: *If the bones of Jesus were to be discovered, it would be a big finding! It would cause us to adjust our understanding of Christianity, yes. But ultimately, **the truth and power of Christianity would remain undisturbed.** We would still have all of Jesus's teachings and we would have all of his stories and we would have his wonderful example of love for the outcast. . . . And even though Easter wouldn't be about the physical resurrection of Jesus, we would go on celebrating the example and testimony of this great Man of God, who lives on in our hearts, and who inspires us to be kind to others. Even if the tomb wasn't empty, our hearts would still be full.*

This response sounds so innocent and plausible, so thoughtful and hope-filled....

Some of you with physical maturity might remember Andrea Crouch... top of the Christian music charts back a few decades...he wrote some classic songs... "*My Tribute*... he wrote and performed a song called *If heaven was never promised*....Listen to the words:

*You may ask me why I serve the Lord,
Is it just for heaven's gain.
Or to walk those mighty streets of gold,*

And to hear the angels sing.

*Is it just to drink from the fountain,
That never shall run dry.
Or just to live forever, ever, and ever,
In that sweet, sweet bye and bye.*

Chorus:

*But if heaven never was promised to me,
Neither God's promise to live eternally.
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.
Living in a world of darkness,
You came along and brought me the light.
If there were never any streets of gold,
Neither a land where we'll never grow old,
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.*

*You've been my closest friend down through the years,
And every time I cry You dry my tears.
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.
Living in a world of darkness,
living in a world of darkness,
You came along and brought me the light.*

Some noble ideas there... but Andrea Crouch basically says in that song that the resurrection of Jesus would not affect his life all that much had it not happened... the benefits of just knowing Jesus... has made it all worth it... *Being a Christian is a wonderful thing!... **It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.***

There is a man who took great issue with that song never having heard it... nearly 2000 years ago... the apostle Paul... wrote the most profound, detailed, account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what resurrection should mean for us.

*In a nutshell... **if Christ did not raise from the dead.... What in the world are we wasting our time here for?...why aren't we out eating and drinking and doing whatever feels good?.... why are we all sitting in church enduring a sermon that means absolutely NOTHING!***

If Jesus did not raise from the dead... there is no light in a world of darkness..... there is no Jesus wiping away our tears... there is no "What a friend we have in Jesus" ... and here's the big one... {I'm giving you the bottom lines all at once}

If Jesus had not been raised from the dead... He would be no Savior!... There would be no Savior from our eternal death due to the wages of sin... Paul wrote the greatest treatise on the

resurrection of Jesus Christ... what it means.... What it does and what it makes possible for us in all of Scripture... the possibility of bodily resurrection for all believers.

Please turn in your Bibles to 1st Corinthians chapter 15... I would like us to take a walk through the first twenty or so verses of this lengthy chapter... a total of fifty-eight verses all on resurrection.

These first twenty verses are vital verses for us on this great day... you could divide them into two main themes... **verses 1-11 defines the gospel of Jesus Christ... verses 12-20 are about the “fact” of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the necessity of it...**

My hope is after looking at these... you will have no doubt the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to all of your life.

Read verse 1

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth... if this is your first time with us and would like to know more about Paul and the church at Corinth... there are nineteen sermons so far in the series you can listen to on our website.

Here Paul calls them “brothers”... they are fellow believers in Christ... who are struggling in many of the truths that Paul and others had been teaching them over a period of at least five years... regarding the Christian faith... they are a small church in a sea of paganism... they came out of the surrounding Greek and Roman cultures...and are still greatly influenced by them.

That culture was in conflict with their new Christian faith... so Paul... recognizes this tension and does a wise thing,... He takes them back to the gospel...*I’ve taught you this, but let’s look at it again... It is vital you get this.*

This is so important to see... Paul is not presenting to them some theory on life and religion... he is not giving them a philosophy or a set of morals to live by...he’s not giving them advice.... He presents them with NEWS...good news!

What is news?... **it is the reporting of actual events!** ... Paul begins by reminding them that what he is going to tell them is ACTUAL NEWS... IT HAPPENED!

We preach Christ... There is more to that statement than you probably think... 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.... [And all of us who claim to be preachers should remember that!... that’s another sermon].

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... it comes from a unique Greek word *Kerusso*... it is a different word than “to teach”... or to *philosophize* ... or to let 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...if fact... the herald was never to deliver ANYTHING but the news...

Events that really happened... there was never to be any creativity in the work of the herald...all they were to do was to announce the actual events that have happened in that day...Webster defines news as *new information or a report about something **that has happened** recently...*

So... right off the bat... Paul is saying this “gospel” is. **Something that ACTUALLY HAPPENED!**... and what actually happened is very good! What was so good?...

Read verse 2

By this gospel... by this good ACTUAL news... you can be saved from eternal damnation...again from the *wages of your sin*...there is no better news for us than this!... everything else is temporary... salvation from your sins is eternal....nothing matters more!

He says “*you are saved by this gospel*... **If you hold fast the word which I proclaimed to you as good news...**

1. If you are truly saved you are secure in your salvation... you won’t and can’t lose it...The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed...talking to His “sheep”... **"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand"** (John 10:28-29b)...saved people are ‘unsnatchable’...

2. BUT... it is possible to THINK you are saved when in fact you are not... how’s that?...You may have had an emotional experience at some religious meeting... you may have said a few words like “*I believe in Jesus*”...But you never gave Him your life... you never made Him as Lord of your life... and as soon as the heat gets turned up in your life... you bolt!...*It’s getting hot in here! This doesn’t work!*

Churches are full of professing unsaved Christians!...over in 2nd Corinthians 13:5 Paul recognized that fact so he tells his church.... To **examine themselves whether you be in the faith...**

So... the test as Paul says here...for salvation is... **If you hold fast the word**...the gospel of Jesus Christ...whatever happens in this life doesn’t matter when it comes to your holding on to the Word.

How important is the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Verse 3 **I delivered to you as of first importance**...there’s a lot of important things in life... a lot of things you have on your list labeled as “crucial”... but there is NOTHING more crucial...nothing more important than the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Can each one of you define what the gospel of Jesus Christ is?... in one sentence?... if not here it is... this is it... memorize it... it has three crucial parts not two but three...

(3) **For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received... here it is... highlight it... underline it... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... and that HE was buried... and He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.** [repeat]

Remember... this is NEWS!... and Paul knows he needs to substantiate this news... He needs to prove it... Ever have people asking for proof of you Christianity?... So Paul builds the case that this is news not just some made up fairytale of a religion.

Christianity exists on the truth of the gospel... the actual events that make up the gospel... Christ died... was buried and rose again are all essential FACTS... it starts with 'was He dead?'

1. We know Christ was dead because He was buried... I'm not going to go into it though it is fascinating... to understand everything from the treatment on the cross.. Roman procedures for handling the dead... especially criminals... the body preparations for the dead... the embalming... let's just say there was no way that Jesus didn't die on that cross!... the Romans AND the Jewish Pharisees could not afford anything less than death.

2. Christ died according to the Scriptures... 1st proof... these events were foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament... yes... the Old Testament... the New had not been written yet... in fact... 1st Corinthians is one of the first books to have been written in the New Testament... all four gospels would be written much later...

So... 5, 6, 7 hundred years before the events of Christ death, burial and resurrection were foretold in the Old Testament... Isaiah 53:4 mentions how the Suffering Servant "**took up our pain and bore our suffering.**"

He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures... Psalm 16... 22... Isaiah 53... Daniel 12... so on... The next proof...

Read verse 5

3. The best evidence for a dead person being resurrected is for the dead person to show up! Jesus appeared!... not to just one or two:

Read verses 5 & 6

How many witnesses do you need before you believe something really happened?... 500 enough?... Paul says **some have fallen asleep...** some have died... but most of them are still living!... actual people you could seek out and ask... *did you actually see Jesus?*

If you don't believe me when I tell you Jesus rose from the dead.... Go ask them!

Read verse 7

There are several "James" in the New Testament... this one is probably Jesus's half-brother... what's amazing about that is that James the brother of Jesus didn't believe Jesus was who He claimed to be... the Son of God... the Messiah...

You can imagine the difficulty in believing your brother was God!...I don't have a brother but I have a sister... she doesn't even believe I'm a pastor... John 7 **says that Jesus's brothers didn't even believe in Him.**

So Jesus has a post death meeting with His unbelieving brother... and what are the results?... His brother a few days later becomes one of the founders of the church!...and then a very special witness is mentioned in verses 8 to 10...

And last of all, as to *one untimely born*... literally it would be... as one aborted or a result of a miscarriage... Paul is referring to himself... and the incredible miracle of his conversion... it's his way on saying he was completely unworthy of salvation...

Read verses 8 & 9

I didn't deserve it... I don't deserve it... I'm a wretched sinner... a pathetic man YET

Read verses 10 & 11

The church's greatest persecutor has become the church's greatest preacher of the gospel!

In John Stott's *Basic Christianity*... quotes Sir Edward Clark... royal attorney... Solicitor General... famously represented Oscar Wilde... in a letter he wrote to a Rev. E.L. Macassey.... Which has since become a very famous letter:

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!

So those first eleven verses is all about the historical fact of the death...burial... and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.....what follows is WHY IT MATTERS... why the fact of the resurrection is essential to the Christian faith and all of life.

Read verse 12

The Corinthian church came out of a culture that embraced the idea that the physical body and the spiritual soul were two separate entities...the physical body is where everything evil

originated from... the soul was everything good.... and when one died... the soul would be separated from the physical body... or better.... Liberated from the physical body.

The idea of a bodily resurrection was absurd to the Corinthian Greco-Roman mindset...so Paul is dealing with those who haven't moved beyond that thinking... some in the church may be professing Jesus Christ...they may believe in Him... but they do not believe He was resurrected.

How big a deal is this?

Read verse 13

Paul just laid out the defense of the historical fact of Jesus's death, burial and resurrection... all three key to the "good news" being "good news"... listen to his logical argument:

1. If there is no resurrection... *then everything I told you was false...[but there are over five hundred witnesses!]*

Read verse 14

This is huge!... our preaching... our telling of the good news has been a big waste of energy and time... why?... because if Jesus was not resurrected from the dead... CHRISTIANITY IS NOT TRUE!

You who "live by faith" have been living a lie!

You may say... *But I'm encouraged by sermons. They help me!* Paul would say to that: ***We don't preach the gospel because it's helpful; we preach the gospel because it's true.*** [It's news!]And ultimately, if it's not true, it's not helpful.....

Read verse 15

Not only did we all believe a lie... we've been lying to others!...every Sunday I've been up here I've based everything I said on a lie!

Read verses 16 & 17

Why would we still be in our sins?... why wouldn't Jesus's death on the cross still be enough to pay the price of our sins?...**Because a dead man cannot save anybody!**...If Jesus did not raise from the dead...death is victorious!... sin reigns!... If we have placed our hope in a dead man... we will all be dead "men"!

Easter us about victory over Friday... On Friday Jesus went to the cross... HE DIED... if that is where it all ended it would have been called Bad Friday...It is Good Friday because Jesus defeated death/

Read verse 19

We believed an eternal lie!...

This has all been a waste of time... we have no salvation... we have no hope... THIS LIFE IS ALL THERE IS!

If this life is all there is... it matters not what you do!...It doesn't matter what you think, what you do, how you live, how much you sin.... Verse 32 says...**if the dead are not raised...let us eat, drink for tomorrow we die...** or as Dostoevsky famously said in his novel Brothers Karamazov "*Everything is permitted... and THAT IS THAT!*"

BUT... that is NOT that!

Read verses 20-22

The resurrection of Jesus Christ DID happen...

- A. Secures our eternal life.
- B. All of God's promises to us are validated and secured...
- C. It gives meaning and purpose in all we do.
- D. It assures us that there is light in a dark world.
- E. Our tears will be wiped away...our sorrows WILL be turned to joy!

What you believe about Christ's resurrection will impact the entirety of your life!...I'll close with this... think about this.

Who we are now is based on what we believe our ultimate future will be....how we act...what we do...what we think...how we think...our attitudes...our fears, our strengths... are based GREATLY on how we view the conclusion of this life on earth.

Let me illustrate...a classic illustration... cannot remember where I heard it first... Let's say there are two women who are working in identical jobs...very menial, tedious jobs...jobs nobody would actually desire to have...both work exceedingly long hours in terrible working conditions...very strenuous labor....*identical situations.*

Here's the difference...one lady is promised at the end of one full year of work a check for twelve thousand dollars.... The other woman is promised a check for twelve million dollars... **do you think their attitudes regarding that work is identical?**...of course not!

I would imagine the woman promised the twelve million might even whistle while she worked!... while the other is most certainly depressed and feeling oppressed every moment.... Bottom line... each of the woman are approaching their jobs VERY differently!

The woman promised the twelve thousand... she goes to work every day feeling oppressed why?... how she sees the future makes what she is doing every day seem tedious, unfair and oppressive... the woman getting the twelve million isn't focusing on her present condition... she's daydreaming about what she will spend the twelve million on.

Point... Who we are now is based on what we believe our ultimate future will be....so much of our day to day attitudes.... And our attitude about life in general...is based on how we view our future....

If the future means eternal death... nothingness... then why would we not embrace verse 32?...**Let us eat drink for tomorrow we die....** For the Christian... resurrection is our future!...

If today you feel as if there is no hope for you in the future... it will effect today... but if you see the future as bright and sunny, full of hope... you can get through your days...the point?...**if you truly grasp on to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ... if you see the miracle in it... and you see the amazing hope it provides for the future....**

If you truly have embraced the assurance of having hope in your eternal life with the Savior... and really grasp it...really believe it... how you live now... your attitude now... what you value now...how you walk through each and every day... will be greatly affected by that future outlook.

We are to live every day of our lives in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In that hypothetical question... the proper response would be something like... *“Don’t waste my time with such nonsensical hypothetical impossible questions.... Christ has been resurrected... and because He lives.... I live!!!”*

CHRIST IS RISEN!