

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Resurrection Power”**

November 18, 2018 - 1 *Corinthians* 15:20-28

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**Objective:** To help people realize the total victory we have in Jesus’ resurrection.

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*Opening prayer*

Last Sunday I started the sermon with a handful of “Why” questions. You might remember one of the ‘Why’ questions was: **“At the drive up ATM, why is there braille?”**

I received an e-mail from Mike Fister on Sunday afternoon - which said, *“I see your braille on drive up ATMs and raise you this.....”* (pic from Mike of pilot lounge).

**Turn to: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28**

We’ve seen over the last 2 weeks that the Christians in the church in Corinth struggled with letting go of their cultural and philosophical thoughts and beliefs regarding the resurrection of the dead. It’s important to note that these believers were likely saying that they believed Jesus was raised from the dead, but denying that anybody but Jesus would be raised.

This is why in the first 10 verses Paul repeats the basics of the gospel for them - and then in vs. 11-19 he unfolded the consequences to their faith of denying resurrection. Paul stated you can’t have a resurrected Jesus only. If God doesn’t raise the dead...then even Jesus wasn’t raised!

Their logic was inconsistent and false.

Resurrection is a reality - and not only was Jesus raised, but all who are in Christ will be raised!

***Read vs. 20-28***

There are 4 truths I want to highlight in these verses today - the first truth is this:

**We all share a common destiny in life: death.** vs. 21-22

1 out of 1 people will die.

Some will die due to their own fault, but all will die - because we all come from Adam.

“For as by a man came death...” vs. 21

“For as in Adam all die...” vs. 22

Death for every one of us is inevitable...unavoidable.

**Ecclesiastes 7:2; 4 (NIV)**

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.”

“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.”

Not only is death our common destiny, but sin is the cause of death, and we can trace the beginning of sin in the human race back to Adam.

**Romans 5:12**

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men (people) because all sinned...”

**5:18-19**

“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all <sup>men</sup> (people), so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all <sup>men</sup> (people).

19 For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one Man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

The effects of Adam’s sin extend to all of us.

Nobody escapes death...it’s our common destiny.

“But” - vs. 20. Adam’s sin and resulting death is not the end of the story.

The resurrection of Christ has the power to reverse the commonality of Adam’s death, the common lot of humanity is our death which is traced back to Adam.

vs. 20 - “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

The contrast between Adam and Christ couldn’t be more vivid. Death to life! Adam’s death had consequences for the entire race - so does the resurrection of Christ!

vs. 20, 23: The resurrected Jesus is referred to as the “firstfruits” - this is a term from the farming or agrarian culture which refers to the first part of the harvest. The initial harvest - the “firstfruits” is a preview of what the rest of the harvest will be like. “firstfruits” is something which is first, and it’s a prelude to what will follow in great abundance.

In the N.T. this term is used as a metaphor illustrating that the risen Christ is a preview of the remaining

spiritual harvest. The resurrection of Christ is the “firstfruits”, and we who are *“in Christ”* (alive or “fallen asleep” vs. 20) will follow the example of Christ in His resurrection. We are the remaining harvest. Jesus’ resurrection is a *down payment - earnest money* guaranteeing our own future resurrection which God has promised.

**2 Corinthians 1:22**

“...and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

The “all” of 15:22 - “...so also in Christ shall all be made alive” Does not mean all people will be saved regardless of their faith or lack of faith. The “all” is qualified by the phrase in vs. 18 & 20, “those who have fallen asleep in Christ” and “...those who belong to Christ” in vs. 23.

The results of Adam’s sin flows into all humanity because all humanity was in Adam.

The results of the righteous and resurrected Christ flow to those who identify with Christ through faith - and thereby receive the power and the benefits of His resurrection.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he (they are) is a new creation.”

As Adam was the representative head of the human race, Jesus is the “firstfruits” of a new humanity...a spiritual humanity.

So, even though we have a common destiny in death, we all have a common hope in the life of Christ.

**Our common hope in life is the life of Christ.** vs. 22-23

vs. 23-24 - “But each in his own order” - “order” (*tagmati*) is a military term and has the idea of soldiers marching in step - in formation - according to their rank - structure - sequence.

There is an order God has decreed for resurrection.

First is Christ - the “firstfruits”. The Bible will mention *the resurrection*, but there are multiple resurrections in *the resurrection*, and there has been at least 2,000 years between His resurrection and our resurrection. “Then at His coming those who belong to Christ.”

Our bodily resurrection is coming. This would include “those who have fallen asleep” in Christ (vs. 20) and those who will be alive upon His return (vs. 23 - *Parousia* = coming).

What happens when we die if we aren't resurrected right away?

If you are a believer, at the moment of your death. your spirit is with Christ. “...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” 2 Cor. 5:8

Your spirit enters eternity - but your body remains in the grave. “All (*bodies*) go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.” Eccl. 3:20

But when Christ comes back - at what's called the rapture of the Church - the *'taking up'* of the Church - both those who are dead in Christ - and those who are alive will be caught up in the air - and our spirit will be united with our resurrected bodies!

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

"Therefore encourage one another with these words."

This is our common hope. Death is not the destiny for those who have faith in Christ.

What is your destiny? Do you have faith in Christ?

**The Kingdom of God is coming!** vs. 24-28

"Then comes the end..."

Do you realize there is coming an end to human history? God is in control of history - sin and death has not ruined His plans - He is in the process of defeating sin and death and will bring all things to the end He has decreed! In the end, His kingdom will reign. All enemies to His kingdom will be vanquished.

**vs. 24:** "Then comes the end, when He (Christ) delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power."

**25** For He (Christ) must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

As incarnate God, Jesus willingly and lovingly works to reign over creation and “delivers the kingdom to God the Father”.

Does this mean Jesus is somehow less than God?

Does this mean God the Father is more important and powerful than Jesus?

No.

As C.K. Barrett says, “...*this does not necessarily imply difference of status, but it does imply difference of role and operation.*”

Jesus is fully God - of the same substance and essence as the Father - no difference in status or significance.

This passage simply unfolds the different functions at work within the Triune God. He submits to the will of the Father - *not* because the Father is more ‘God’ than He is, but because this is the eternal plan of the Triune God for the salvation of the world which emanates from each person of the Godhead. Any submission of Jesus to the Father is purely functional and out of love, not an indication of status or their level of ‘*God-ness*’.

We often fail to realize the ultimate goal and motivation behind God’s plan of salvation. In our Western mindset, we make it about us...as individuals. We understand and think about God saving *our soul*. He offers forgiveness for *our sins*. This is true. Salvation

is a personal issue which involves a personal decision about the person and work of Christ. Each person must decide to put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins...or they decide (*actively or passively*) to reject Christ - His claims, His promises and His work on the cross. But it's also deficient and spiritually anemic to think about God's plan of redemption in merely personal or individual terms because it misses the larger and more glorious work of God in the sending of His Son.

The work of Christ on the cross is not only for human redemption, but to reverse every effect of Adam's sin and redeem all of creation back to its Creator! God will redeem the fallen world back to its Edenic state!

The birth of Jesus and His eventual death for sin, burial and resurrection was to break the death-grip of sin on humanity and the cosmos - so that the Kingdom of God could be realized in its fullness once again.

The salvation Jesus has completed will put the entire universe back into its proper and healthy order under the reign of God as the Kingdom of God once again exercises authority and dominion over all things for eternity.

It's not just about us. His salvation certainly includes us not only in our saving, but also in our co-reigning with



Christ when His Kingdom is placed back to its rightful place.

**The destruction of death.** vs. 26

What greater enemy has humanity had other than death? The greatest fear of so many people is death. They're so afraid of its power they won't even talk about it. When a loved one dies, they can't have a reasonable conversation because their fear takes their mind hostage. I can understand this when they have no hope. I can understand this when they only see this life - when they have no concept of belief in resurrection unto eternal life with Christ.

But I don't understand it when a Christian responds with such agony and hopelessness at the death of a believing loved one or friend.

I don't want to be misunderstood here...I realize grief, sorrow and heartache is normal when a Christian dies.

I don't think Christians should be emotionally cold, numb or detached, but I do think Christians should have hope in the face of death - and we should grieve intensely, but with a joy of our loved-ones presence with Christ - and our eventual resurrection where we will join all believers who have gone before us as we celebrate and rule and reign with Christ for all eternity!

What is your theology of death?

Does death still hold its sting and power over you, or do you know - not just in your mind, but also in your heart, that Jesus has defeated death?

**vs. 26** - “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Why is it the last enemy to be destroyed?

Maybe because it’s the greatest enemy.

Maybe because it’s the universal pain and power of sin.

Whatever the reason...know it’s defeat will be final - complete - total and thorough.

**Revelation 20:14**

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

### ***Apply it...***

Through the resurrection of Christ God has rescued us from death. *vs. 20-22*

Have you put your faith in Christ?

What’s your eternal destiny? You can decide right now to put your faith in Christ - and you can be certain of your destiny!

**A***dmitt your sins*

**B***elieve in the resurrected Jesus*

**C***ommit each day to Him!*

Christian...be comforted...God’s plan of redemption is at work! *vs. 23-26*

He is saving the world - human souls and the entire cosmos - so His kingdom can reign once again.

Be comforted...and be excited that He wants to use you in redeeming all of creation to usher in His kingdom!

Christian...look forward to your future joy! *vs. 27-28*

Death has been defeated - and it will be gone forever at the final judgment (**Rev. 20:14**).

Everything will be in its rightful place.

God will be “all in all”.

Justice - all the wrongs and evils of history will be dealt with, and all the right and holy things of history will be acknowledged.

Love will be the universal language and experience of the people of God. When the end is here and the Kingdom of God is delivered to the Father by the Son - when every evil authority and power has been defeated - when death itself has been defeated and thrown into the lake of fire (**Rev 20:14**) - love will be the universal experience of heaven (**1 Cor. 13:13**).

That is a future we can look forward to - a future reality made possible by the resurrection of Christ.

*Close in prayer*