

Easter | 1 Corinthians 15 | March 31st 2024

On Palm Sunday we remember when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He was presented as king. It was a moment that had been prophesied about hundred of years before. It also was a moment that sealed Israel's rejection of Him. On Good Friday we remember Jesus dying on the cross. He is our High Priest who also is the sacrifice. He lived a perfect life in His body and was then able to offer His blood to God the Father. His blood is the only payment that is acceptable for sins. All these events have been building to this moment. On Easter Sunday morning we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. That He did not stay in the grave. As we look at 1 Corinthians 15 Paul will make it very clear that without the resurrection, we have nothing.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 ESV

- (1) Now I would remind you, brothers, of **the gospel I preached to you**, which you received, in which you stand,
- (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.
- (3) For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also received: **that Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the **Scriptures**,
- (4) **that He was buried, that He was raised** on the third day in accordance with the **Scriptures**,
- (5) and **that He appeared** to Cephas, then to the twelve.
- (6) **Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time**, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.
- (7) **Then He appeared** to James, then to all the apostles.
- (8) Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me.

Paul taught the Corinthian church the gospel, this was of first importance to him. The truth of the gospel is the most important thing. In verse 3 he gives a recap of the gospel. **He starts with the fact that Christ died for our sins.** The core of the gospel is that Jesus is the blood sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Jesus shed His blood, He died for our sins. This was in accordance with the Scriptures. The Old Testament pointed to the death of Jesus in so many ways. From the skins God made Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 to the Passover lamb. Jesus' death was the fulfillment of scripture. Then He was buried. Jesus fully died on the cross and His lifeless body was laid into a tomb. **Historically, the death of Jesus is never doubted.** Almost everyone agrees He died, the debate is over what happened next. He was raised on the third day. He did not stay dead. Jesus was raised to life. All of this fulfilled scripture.

Jesus was raised to life and showed Himself to people. There are **at least 12 unique appearances of Jesus once He is resurrected.** Paul mentions 6 of them here. At one time He appeared to over 500 people. Paul even is so bold to claim that many are still alive. They can give you a first hand account of seeing and talking to Jesus after His death. **Lies were spread to distort this amazing truth.**

Matthew 28:11-15 ESV

(11) While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told **the chief priests** all that had taken place.

(12) And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, **they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers** (13) and said, **“Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’**

(14) And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

(15) So they took the money and did as they were directed. And **this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.**

The Roman soldiers came to the chief priest describing all that had taken place. These soldiers had seen an angel descend and roll back the stone. They felt the earthquake and in fear of everything became like dead men. How much money did it take for them to lie about it all? They knew what opened the grave that morning. Lies about the body of Jesus have continued to circulate. **Yet, the historical evidence is overwhelming. To deny the resurrection of Jesus is not a factual issue but a heart issue.** You have to receive this truth like the Corinthians did in order to be saved.

1 Corinthians 15:1 ESV

(1) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, **which you received, in which you stand,**

When the Corinthians heard the message that Jesus died for their sins and was raised to life, they received it as truth. This word receive means to **“take into close association, to take (to oneself)”** They took this truth to themselves. They trusted that Jesus died for them and was risen. A person is saved when they receive Jesus.

John 1:11-13 ESV

(11) He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.

(12) **But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name,** He gave the right to become children of God,

(13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

To receive Jesus is to believe in Him. To believe in who He is, as fully God, fully Man and what He did by dying on the cross and raising three days later. You are trusting Him. **Salvation is not by human effort**, and you cannot choose it for someone else, and I cannot even convince you of it this morning. The Holy Spirit through the Word of God has to work on your heart and you have to receive it as truth. Then you start growing.

1 Corinthians 15:2 ESV

(2) and by which you **are being saved, if** you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you **believed in vain.**

The moment someone receives, believes in Jesus they are saved, declared holy in God's eyes. **This starts the process of them being saved.** This is called sanctification. It is the ongoing effect of Jesus in our life. We continue to grow and continue to be saved as we grow close to Him. This is not heaven or hell saved, but our growing relationship with Jesus. **Believing in vain means without result or purpose.** Paul was concerned that the Corinthians were not growing and maturing as they should. **The Corinthians were letting the world influence them and their thinking.**

1 Corinthians 15:12-15 ESV

(12) Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, **how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

To clarify what Paul is talking about, the word resurrection is **anastasis**, it combines the word **ana** which means **up**, and **histēmi**; **to cause or make to stand**. So literally the word means **to stand up the dead**. The Corinthians were listening to the philosophers of the day and the culture who denied a resurrection of the dead. It is the age old question, what happens after death? Will the dead ever stand back up?

During this time there were three main theories. **First** was the stoics that taught **the soul merged into deity**. You loose all personality and individuality and merge energy with the whole. This is prevalent in eastern philosophy and is increasingly popular today. **The idea that your energy joins into the universe.** The Second idea was **Epicurean** philosophy that said **there is nothing after death**. This is secular humanism today. That there is no life after death so enjoy this life for what you can. The last theory was the immortality of the soul, or **reincarnation**. Scripture teaches a truth wholly different from all three of these ideas. That after death Jesus was resurrected. **His physical body was raised.**

Luke 24:36-44 ESV

(36) As they were talking about these things, Jesus Himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"

(37) But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw **a spirit**.

(38) And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

(39) See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. **Touch Me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

(40) And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

(41) And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

(42) They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, (43) and **He took it and ate before them.**

(44) Then He said to them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Jesus was not a spirit, **He had a physical resurrected body** that could be touched. He could even eat. Yet the laws of physics did not apply to Him as He could appear in rooms that were locked. He still had a personality and was an individual, He was did not cease to exist, and He was not reincarnate. **The truth of the resurrection says that there is life beyond death.** Jesus conquered the grave.

Our society is fascinated by death/ murder, our movies are filled with it. Yet, the reality of death is a truth our society runs from. We don't like talking about it, death and definitely are too scared to talk about what comes after. Only **61% of Americans believe in life after death.** Another study showed this has dropped **16% in the last 20 years** and in my opinion will continue to drop. In spite of our culture, Jesus' resurrection is the core truth of the gospel

1 Corinthians 15:13-18 ESV

- (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.
 (14) And **if Christ has not been raised**, then our preaching is in **vain** and your faith is in **vain**.
 (15) **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.
 (16) **For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.**
 (17) And if Christ has not been raised, **your faith is futile** and **you are still in your sins**.
 (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ **have perished**.

If there is no life after death, if the dead are not raised then even Jesus is not raised. Without Jesus' resurrection, preaching is pointless, the new testament authors are lying and blaspheming God, we are still in our sins, and our faith is futile. **Faith has no value by itself.** Faith for faith's sake is empty and worthless. Faith has to be in something. Faith's value comes from the object it is in. In our case that is Jesus. **Everything hinges on His resurrection.**

1 Corinthians 15:19 ESV

- (19) **If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

If a walk with Christ only gave us hope for this life right now, and did not involve the resurrection, then we are to be pitied. **Walking with Christ would not be worth it if you took heaven and eternity away.** If this life is it, then...

1 Corinthians 15:32 ESV

- (32) What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? **If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."**

To say it in a more popular way, Carpe Diem, seize the day. If this is it, eat drink be merry, live selfishly, make your kingdom here, for tomorrow we die and it's all over.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 ESV

(20) But in fact **Christ has been raised from the dead**, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

(21) For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

(22) For as in Adam all die, **so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

He died on the cross, paying for our sins and is risen. We do not have to guess or worry about what comes after death, **because Jesus is resurrected, we will be also.** Just as sin and death came through Adam, life and the resurrection came through Jesus. He accomplished it. Life and salvation are found in Him. **Our future is incredible because of what He accomplished!**

1 Corinthians 15:23-26 ESV

(23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.

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

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

(26) **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

He was the first to be resurrected, but not the last. His life gives us life. At the rapture all believers, those who have already died and those who are physically alive will be given resurrected bodies and we will go to be with Jesus. Then after the tribulation He will come and reign on this earth for 1,000 years. He has to destroy everything that stands against Him and this truth. **He will usher in a perfect kingdom.** Our king will reign and we will be with Him. The very last enemy to be destroyed is physical death. All believers at this point will be resurrected and death will be no more.

Revelation 21:3-5 ESV

(3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and **they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.**

(4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and **death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**"

(5) And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, **I am making all things new.**" Also He said, "Write this down, **for these words are trustworthy and true.**"

If you believe that Jesus rose from the dead then this is your incredible future. That we will dwell with God in His presence. Death will be no more! No more mourning, or crying or pain! He is making all things new. **This is so much more than a hope, it is a sure confidence that is based on the empty tomb.** If you believe that Jesus rose, are you excited for your future with Him? **Are you living like this is your future?**

1 Corinthians 15:53-58 ESV

(53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

(54) **When the perishable puts on the imperishable**, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: **“Death is swallowed up in victory.”**

(55) “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

(56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

(57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, **be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**

We have been called by God to be steadfast, firmly, solidly, planted in Him. To be immovable off our relationship with Him. **We are to know that living for Him will not be vain because of the resurrection of Jesus.** Death is swallowed in victory. We have an amazing future ahead of us as believers. **You will never regret growing closer to Jesus!** It will be more worth it than we can even imagine. If you believe that Jesus rose, and that you will have resurrected body, then what is more important than living for that future?

2 Peter 1:5-7 describes different areas for us to grow and mature in as we grow closer to Jesus. I would encourage you to look up these verses.

2 Peter 1:8-11 ESV

(8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from **being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(9) For whoever lacks these qualities **is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.**

(10) Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

(11) **For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

There are believers who are so nearsighted, so focused on this earth, that they have forgotten what Jesus did for them. **They are saved but they are missing the point.** Then there are believers that are so excited about Jesus, the resurrection, our future with Him that they grow close to Him. For these believers they will receive amazing rewards, **an abundant, lavish, victors welcome into God’s kingdom.** He is risen and our resurrection is coming, lets live for Him!