

“Because He Lives, You Will Live”
(1 Corinthians 15:12-22)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we’re going to look at something

The minds and hearts of all believers are drawn to every Easter Sunday:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ –

The fact that after He was crucified, buried, and was in the tomb for three days,

He rose again from the dead.

How important is the resurrection?

The Christian church as a whole considers it important enough

To warrant a day in the church calendar

So that the faithful won’t forget.

Sadly, this shows how most Christians underestimate the value God puts on it.

He doesn’t want it celebrated once a year, but once every week.

Why? Because the resurrection is the culmination of Jesus’ work –

It signals the completion of the New Creation

And of our being made new creatures in Him.

Our Lord originally created everything in six days, rested on the seventh,

And then set that day apart to be a day of rest and worship for His people.

This Sabbath continued even after Adam and Eve sinned,

And destroyed the creation by corrupting it with their sin,

As well as their children.

But when the Son of God came into this world as a man,

When He died and rose again to life,

He laid the foundation for a New Creation

In which everything will be made new again –

The present heavens and earth will one day be destroyed/purified,

A new heavens and earth will be born;

And in the meantime,

Everyone who believes in and receives Jesus Christ

Will become a part of that new creation –

They will be made new creatures –

Because of what Jesus has done.

That's why the fourth commandment – “Remember the Sabbath day (i.e., the day of rest) to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8) –

Is no longer observed on the seventh day of the week,

But on the first day –

The day that Jesus rose,

The day He calls by His own name (the Lord's Day) –

So that we would remember what He did,

What we have to look forward to,

And how it is only through faith in Him

That we will ever gain it.

B. Preview.

The resurrection is the key:

Without it, there would be no new creation, no possibility of salvation, no hope.

That's what Paul tells us this morning.

Let's consider three things:

1. First, that there were some at Corinth who denied the possibility of a resurrection.
2. Second, what it would mean if there was no resurrection.
3. And finally, what it means that the resurrection did take place.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider that there were some at Corinth that denied the possibility of a resurrection.

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v. 12).

1. First, Paul points out there were *those who did believe* in the resurrection and were preaching it.

Who were they?

Those who had seen Him alive, after the crucifixion.

Those He called to be witnesses of this event, because they had seen Him,

Such as the eleven apostles.

Luke writes, “While they were telling these things [i.e., the two who saw Him on the road to Emmaus], He Himself stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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.’ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took

it and ate *it* before them. Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. *You are witnesses of these things*’” (Luke 24:36-48).

Paul tells us that Jesus showed Himself to many more –

To over five hundred at one time –

And finally, to Paul himself.

In the opening verses of our chapter, we read,

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and *last of all*, as to one untimely born, *He appeared to me also*. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed” (1 Cor. 15:1-11).

We don’t know how many saw Jesus altogether,

But we do know all it takes to establish any fact is two or three witnesses.

The Lord showed Himself to over 500.

He also had four write down their eyewitness testimonies – Matthew, John, Paul and Peter –

And two the testimonies of others who saw Him – Mark and Luke.

2. Yet, in spite of these witnesses, there were those in Corinth that denied the resurrection – even that such a thing was possible.

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v. 12).

When Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Philosophers on Mars Hill,

They didn’t believe him either.

Luke writes, “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this’” (Acts 17:32).

There are many today – even in the “church” –

Who seem to have difficulty with it.

How often do you see people rising from the dead?

None of us have; but we have witnesses that did – who saw Jesus alive after He had been crucified and in the tomb for three days.

- B. But now let’s consider what it would mean if there was no resurrection; if such a thing couldn’t happen?

1. Paul gives us the logical outcome.

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised” (vv. 13-15).

If a resurrection isn’t possible, then Jesus wasn’t raised.

If Jesus wasn’t raised, Paul says, then our witness/preaching is worthless, because we’re wrong.

If you happened to believe us, your faith is also worthless.

If we’re preaching that God raised Jesus, when He in fact didn’t,

We’re also bearing false witness against God.

Not only are we deceiving you,

But we're lying about what God actually did.

2. What would happen to you if you believed Paul?

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (vv. 16-19).

If the dead aren't raised, then Jesus hasn't been raised.

If Jesus hasn't been raised – if He's still in the tomb –

Then your faith is worthless –

Your sins have not been forgiven.

If there is no forgiveness,

Then those who died believing in Jesus have perished –

They've all gone to hell for their sins.

If this is all the hope you have in this life –

If you believe you're going to heaven,

When in fact we're going to hell like everyone else,

Then we above all should be pitied.

3. Let me just explain for a moment what Paul means.

a. The key is the resurrection of Jesus.

If there is no resurrection, Jesus wasn't raised.

But if Jesus wasn't raised, there is no forgiveness.

Jesus died on the cross bearing the sins of His people –

Of all who would put their trust in Him to save them.

Those sins are what put Him in the grave.

- b. His resurrection was the proof or the evidence that He successfully paid for those sins.

His being raised to life means those sins no longer had any hold on Him.

When God raised Him, this was His public declaration that He accepted Jesus' sacrifice.

If Jesus hadn't been raised, that would mean two things:

- (i) First, that Jesus isn't God's Son as He said He was.

Paul writes that the resurrection was God's statement to this effect:

“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:1-4).

- (ii) Second, it would mean His payment wasn't accepted.

They would still be holding Him in the grave.

And since He was bearing those sins for us,

It would mean that our sins weren't forgiven,

And we too would perish –

We would justly be held accountable for each and every sin we've committed

And suffer in hell forever.

- (iii) If there is no resurrection, if Jesus wasn't raised,

We are all still accountable for our sins.

- C. But the good news is that the resurrection is not only possible, Jesus was in fact raised again to life.

Paul writes, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (vv. 20-22).

1. Mary saw Him.

The two on the road to Emmaus saw Him.

He appeared to the eleven, then to over 500 at one time, then to Paul.

The Father wanted to make sure there were many eyewitnesses

Because, as we’ve seen, this was His declaration that Jesus is His Son –

That what He said about Himself was true.

2. Since He has been raised, that also means the sins He carried are paid for.

He really is the Savior.

Trusting in Him isn’t worthless –

There is forgiveness of sins.

3. And it means that death isn’t the end, but the beginning.

He is the first fruits from the dead –

His resurrection is the first for all His people –

Because He lives, we who trust Him will also live –

We will be raised again to live forever.

4. In closing, let me apply this to each of us this morning.

If you haven’t turned from your sins and trusted Jesus,

Your situation is really no different than if Jesus hadn’t been raised:

You have no hope.

Your situation is actually worse than if He hadn't

Because you know what God has done –

That He has raised His Son,

That there is forgiveness and eternal life in Him –

But you've chosen either not to believe,

Or not to receive Him.

You need to remember that God not only raised Him,

But has given Him the honor to judge on that final day –

He will be your judge.

Not only will He judge you for every sin you've committed,

He will particularly hold you accountable for your rejecting Him right now.

Jesus said it would be worse for those who heard the Gospel and turned away,

Than for those who have never heard it.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to teach and preach, He said,

“And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave *that city*. As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your *blessing of peace*. But if it is not worthy, take back your *blessing of peace*. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. *Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city*” (Matt. 10:11-15).

Don't let what is good news, turn into bad news for you.

Listen to what God has said about His Son.

Listen to the eyewitness testimonies of these who have seen Him.

Listen to His Spirit as He bears witness to the truth of these things

And to the reality of your sin and guilt.

Receive His offer of love and mercy,

Of full pardon and forgiveness.

Turn from your sins and trust in Jesus.

Don't forget why Jesus was sent.

John writes, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).

For those of you who do know Him,

Be encouraged this morning that for you, death is not the end, but only the beginning.

Jesus was raised for you.

Because He was, your sins are forgiven.

Because He was, you will also be raised.

For you, death is merely falling asleep

To awaken immediately in heaven, in His presence,

In the fullness of His love and joy,

Never to die again,

But to enjoy the blessings of heaven until He returns to raise your body from the grave,

Transform it into His image, and then unite you with it again

To enjoy the blessings of the New Heavens and the New Earth forever.

The resurrection means that everything Jesus said

And everything He promised is true.

You have a glorious future.

And so as those who have received these blessings through faith in His name,

Do your best, by His grace, to become the kind of person you know He wants
you to be

And the means by which others can find Him and life in His name. Amen.

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