

Text: Multiple, Title: The Centrality of the Resurrection, Date/Place: The Road, 4/16/17, Easter AM

A. **Opening illustration:**

B. Background to passage: Matt and I don't usually like to cherry pick verses, but during celebratory religious seasons and days, messages easily become topical fountains of truth from which to drink. Good Friday and the crucifixion can make up books, but let's just use it as a backdrop of the culmination of the weekend, that without the resurrection, would have made it pointless. Give the picture of the tomb that day.

C. Main thought: three truths behind the tomb of about the centrality of the resurrection to our faith

A. **Declaration of His Deity (v. Romans 1:4)**

1. On several occasions, Jesus taught that he was God. If this is not true, there is a big problem with Christianity as Paul expounds on in 1 Cor 15. Another important theological centrality is that if he was not divine, his life could not have been sinless, therefore the sacrifice would not be accepted by a God who demanded a spotless substitute upon which to pour out his wrath. Also on several occasions, Jesus taught that he would be arrested, tried, crucified, and that he would rise. If he didn't, great questions arise about his ability and authority to rule over death. So, here Paul declares that the fact of the resurrection declares him to be divine, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us...
2. **Illustration:** Lee Strobel reflecting on the conversion of his wife, and his planned deliverance, stated, "The starting point seemed obvious to me: clearly the resurrection was the linchpin of the Christian faith. After all, anyone could call himself the Son of God. But if someone could substantiate that assertion by returning to life after being certifiably dead and buried—well, that would be a compelling confirmation that he was telling the truth, even for a skeptic like me, "Although Christ was the Son of God before His resurrection, yet He was openly appointed or declared such among men by this transcendent and crowning event" –Thayer,
3. As you see there are some crucial, necessary, foundational reasons that he had to be God (and really the list above is not even comprehensive). If Jesus was not divine, nothing he said was true; he didn't triumph over death; his sacrifice would have been insufficient; wrath would still come; our faith would be in vain; worship would be worthless and unnecessary, and even blasphemous, and of all men we would be most pitied. We could not witness to friends and neighbors, we would have no hope to offer. We would be laughable to send money to missionaries overseas, so they could tell about a man who simply died.

B. **Causation of Regeneration (1 Peter 1:3)**

1. According to Peter, the resurrection of Christ is the cause of our regeneration. Explain again the exact meaning of the word regeneration. The gospel is the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The Spirit is the means, the drawing to belief is the Father's, but the resurrection is the cause. Check out the rest of the verse. He describes us as now having a living hope. Peter tells us that the inheritance secured by the resurrection is beautiful and secure. In other places in the NT, it teaches us that this world is not our home, but Peter describes the home that is ours. This is the reason that we can have this living hope in our risen Lord. It is an perfect, sinless, permanent place, prepared for those who have truly been born again.
2. **Illustration:** "Becoming a Christian is to have the sovereign captain of the battleship of righteousness commandeer the slave ship of unrighteousness; put the ship-captain, sin, in irons; break the chains of the slaves; and give them such a spiritual sight of grace and glory that they freely serve the new sovereign forever as the irresistible joy and treasure of their lives" –Piper
3. If Jesus didn't rise, we would have no living hope, and we would not be born again. If you are born again, it is because of the resurrection. Your formerly blinded eyes can see. Your formerly dead spirit is alive, and not only to life, but to life abundantly. You now have hope, unlike those that do not follow Christ. Not only a hope of heaven (which is described here as to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you), but a living hope. A hope that remains alive through the darkest night of the soul, through the deepest valleys we can imagine-slow pain of an impending terminal cancer, death of a child or spouse, the deep wounds of divorce and lost relationships, accidents leaving lasting consequences, guilt from past sins-hope that overcomes every kind of suffering. The reason that hope can be so strong is that whether we live or die, we live in Christ, and whether that is on earth or with him, joy unspeakable can never be taken away. The worst that man can do to us turns out for our benefit.

C. **Provision for Our Justification (Romans 4:25)**

1. Finally, the resurrection of Christ provided for our justification. Remind what justification means theologically. In the context of speaking about Abraham's faith being counted to him as righteousness (justified), Paul says that it not only worked that way for Abraham before Christ, but for us after Christ. He elaborates at the end of the verse with an ever so slight gospel condensation-slain for our trespasses and raised for our justification. The resurrection of Christ assures that the sacrifice he made on Friday was acceptable to God. The death and resurrection was God's plan all along, but as a demonstration of its veracity, the blood sacrifice was accepted, the red cord turned white.
  2. Argumentation
  3. **Illustration:** see if you can find the illustration of the red cord in the temple that turned white. Luther and his unbearable conviction that he couldn't do enough to be righteous enough.
  4. If Jesus didn't rise, we would still be condemned before a holy God without the possibility of abolishing the enmity or escaping the just punishment for our sin. If God did not pronounce over us "justified" we would continually be searching for ways to earn our own righteousness. Other major faiths are caught in the do enough mentality because there is no one to pronounce this vindicating imputed righteousness. **If forgiveness alone was enough even, we would be stuck in Charles Stanley's conundrum of making sure he had asked forgiveness for every sin that he could think of before bed in case he died in his sleep.** If we weren't searching for forgiveness, needing justification, we might feel like the Pharisees and believe that we have earned it, and walk in self-righteous. We can't be good enough, so rejoice in the resurrection that provided for a means of justification!!!
- A. **Closing illustration:** On the Easter just before he died, D. William Sangster painfully printed a short note to his daughter. A deeply spiritual Methodist, he had been spearheading a renewal movement in the British Isles after World War II. Then his ministry, except for prayer, was ended by a disease that progressively paralyzed his body, even his vocal chords. But the last Resurrection Sunday he spent on earth, still able to move his fingers, he wrote: "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' Far worse, to have a voice and not want to shout.
- B.
- C. Jesus himself went to great links to make sure everyone knew the resurrection was true; everything from the folded napkin to the appearances for Judas, and the fish he cooked on the side of the Sea of Galilee. He wanted them never to doubt the resurrection, because of its magnitude and absolute requirement to the Christian faith
- D. Invitation to commitment

Additional Notes

- **Is Christ Exalted, Magnified, Honored, and Glorified?**