

Because He Lives – 1 Cor 15:1-22

Welcome; Glad you've chosen to worship with us this Easter weekend

1 Cor 15 – at Harvest, we open up to a passage in the Bible every week, and apply it to our lives

This week being no different, I'd like to focus on v1-22 of 1 Cor 15

It's no surprise to anyone that we live in some turbulent times these days

Not the worst of times; But *uncertain* for sure

8.5% unemployment, and growing; A financial system on shaky ground

Retirement accounts that make you want to cry

And the continuing moral decay of things we've never questioned until recently

It seems that there are few anchors that exist anymore, and even fewer that hold

But I want to tell u something on this resurrection morning – there's at least one that does; And that is, that . . .

Jesus lives (1 Cor 15:1-19)

It's an anchor and a truth, that's not only worthy of your consideration – but your faith, and your trust, and even your life

So important, that the apostle Paul spent 22 verses on it to make sure we get it

To make sure that we *know* it's true

If you already do, I trust this will be an encouragement to you

If not, I hope you do before you leave today

And that this will be the day of your salvation

So follow along with me as I read v1-11

1-2 – After covering a whole slew of topics, Paul is starting to wind down his letter

And in doing so, he brings it back to the foundation of our faith – the *gospel*

The Good News about who Jesus is, and what he did

The point being – you can get a lot of things right in life, but if you get this wrong, it's all for naught; your anchors will not hold

And he makes sure that we understand that believing that gospel is not a one-shot deal, where you make a decision for Christ and then forget all about it

It's not fire insurance so that you can live like the devil, and still go to heaven

He's talking about holding *fast* to the word – firmly believing and remaining convinced of *it all your life*

Otherwise, your initial belief was in *vain* he says – it was to no avail

It has no bearing on your life or death

• So just to make sure that we *have* embraced it, and *continue* to do so . . .

He reviews this gospel, focusing on *the* main ingredient – the resurrection (v3-5)

3 – *Christ* – the Messiah, the promised one, the anointed one of God . . .

Died for our sins – in our place, taking our punishment on himself . . .

In accordance with the Scriptures – just like God said it would happen (v6)

6 – this is Paul's way of saying – “check it out for yourself if you want”

There's plenty of people who saw him with their own eyes (v7)

7 – *James* – most likely referring to the half brother of Jesus

All the apostles – those men in addition to the 12 . . .

Who followed Jesus, were familiar w/ his ministry, witnessed his resurrection, responded to his call to spread the Word

The point is – Jesus appeared to real, accessible, and respected people

Including Paul himself (v8)

10a – confirmation that God can save anybody, even you (v10b-11)

11 – Preached what? That Jesus *lives*

That's the crux of these verses that Paul is driving home

It's an apologetic – a reasoned defense of the faith; And . . .

• **The evidence is compelling**

1. After all, the tomb was empty

Which, if that was the only evidence, apart from a body, we'd be on shaky ground

But it's not b/c . . .

2. The eyewitness testimony is consistent

500 hundred people saying the same thing? And all 4 eyewitness acc'ts in agreement?

That's pretty compelling for such a controversial event as a resurrection from the dead

3. The apostles spent their life preaching it

Not only that he rose again, but that he lives – present tense, in heaven

Everything they wrote and said is based on the resurrection of Jesus

They gave their life *to* it, and . . .

4. They gave their life *for* it

History tells us that every single one of them was killed for preaching the resurrection

Which no one would do if they *knew* that it was false

Nobody voluntarily dies for what they *know* to be false

And since they were in a firsthand position to *know* whether the resurrection was fabricated, and yet gave their life to proclaim it . . .

It's pretty compelling evidence that it's true – that he's risen indeed

The evidence is compelling and . . .

• **The effect is obvious**

You can't ignore the life-changing impact of Christ's resurrection on those around him

It wasn't the empty tomb that changed and charged his followers – it was his *presence* among them

In a moment, they went from a scattered group of frightened cowards – to the greatest peaceful missionary force in the history of the world

The effect was obvious and significant, and it's still happening today

The change in people's lives who surrender themselves to the *living* Lord, is unmistakable and unexplainable any other way

They go fr self-centered, self-absorbed people – to other-oriented conduits of blessing

People who no longer live for themselves, but for him – no matter what the cost

The effect is obvious

- **The alternative is hopeless**

Look at v12-19

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, life as we know it is hopeless . . .

And our faith is futile – pointless; worth nothing

Worse yet, we're still in our sins (17b)

B/c if Jesus didn't rise again, then his sacrifice wasn't sufficient, and sin and Satan won the victory – continuing their reign over us

The cross and the resurrection go hand in hand – one without the other is a moot point

The cross alone has no effect on us, and provides no solution for our problem

That's why Easter is such a huge deal

B/c without the resurrection of Christ, we have no – Savior, Lord . . .

We have no – forgiveness, justification, hope, advocate, life

At best – we're delusional, headed for hell, and happy about it

That's why Paul says *we are of all people most to be pitied* if Christ didn't rise (19)

If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, there's nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire

- *But in fact (v20) Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

That is, Christ's resurrection is the *indicator* and *guarantee* of what's to come – that's what *firstfruits* means

So that those who have already died (*fallen asleep*), will indeed rise again just like Jesus

21-22 – *all* – referring to those who believe

Those who put their faith and trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus – for the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of eternal life

So Paul is saying, that b/c Christ was raised, so too will those who believe in him

Which means that Jesus lives . . .

And because he lives, you can too (1 Cor 15:20-22)

And not just barely, but abundantly . . .

- **Full of life**

Jesus said – *I came that they [his followers] may have life and have it abundantly.*

It's yours to receive – that abundant life

And with it comes the same power for living that raised Jesus from the dead

Do you realize that?

In Christ you have the power to live, and love, and worship – to the *fullest*

In Christ, you have the strength to overcome sin

In Christ, you have the comfort to endure sadness; The peace to weather uncertainty

The opp to walk with him and talk with him along life's narrow way

That's life to the full – and you can have it, b/c he *lives*

Not only that, but you can be . . .

- **Free of fear**

When you give your life to Christ, committing to live his way, for his purposes . . .

He comes into your life, never to leave – *Behold, I am with you always* (Mt 28:20)

And since he's greater than Satan, your worst enemy – there's nothing to fear

B/c greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4)

Neither do you have to fear the fury of God's wrath on judgment day

The Bible says that Jesus *delivers us from the wrath to come* (1 Thess 1:10) . . .

And having been *justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* (Rom 5:9)

Apart from Christ, every single one of us is facing the punishment of God's wrath

But in Christ, we are *saved* from God's wrath

Which means, there's nothing to fear

B/c he lives, you can too – full of life, free of fear, and . . .

- **Filled with hope**

Hope for the future . . .

Knowing with full confidence that as your firstfruit (guarantee/example), he will raise you up, just as he was raised

Like Paul said to the church in Corinth (**2 Cor 4:14**) – [We know] *that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.*

The day will come when God's people will be raised, to be with Jesus, forever

That's hope – hope for the future

Not a wishing kind of hope, but a firm conviction based on the faithful promises of a *living* Savior

Until then, there's also hope for the *present*

Knowing that God is in control; And that he will complete the work he began in you

And that your labor on his behalf, *is not in vain*; It's not hopeless

That's what Paul says at the end of this chapter in 1 Cor 15:58

After assuring us of *our* resurrection b/c of Christ's, he says . . . (read v58)

Your work for Christ, your faithful service on his behalf . . .

On a Service Team, or in CM, or a CO – it's not in vain

It *will* bear fruit if you continue to *abound* in it

That should fill you with hope – for both the present *and* the future

Full of life; Free of fear; Filled with hope, and . . .

- **Forgiven of sin**

B/c he lives, you can too – forgiven of sin

This is where it starts

None of this applies to you apart from God's forgiveness of your sins

You're not *good* enough to deserve his life; You can't *do* enough to earn it

And you're not *close* enough to get it – your sins separate you from him

In fact, the Bible actually says that you're *dead* in your trespasses/sins (Eph 2:1)

That is – you're lifeless to the *things* of God; Separated from the *presence* of God . . .

And you're facing the *consequences* of God – which is death

That's what the Bible says – *the wages* [consequences] *of sin is death*

Meaning that apart from being forgiven of your sin and reconciled to God . . .

You will die physically, to suffer physically, forever separated from God, in the torment of hell

There's no getting around it, the Bible is clear – do nothing, and that's your destiny

The resurrection of Jesus, his life, has no bearing on yours, if you haven't been forgiven of your sins

The good news is – you can be

You can be forgiven, and live life to the full, free of fear, and filled w/ hope . . .

IF you believe, repent, and receive

That's the whole idea of v1-2 where Paul said that the believers *received* the gospel that was preached to them

That is, they believed it (11) . . .

And repented of their sins – not only of the things they *did* wrong, but the things they *believed* that were wrong

And received Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life

That's the only way to receive the resurrection life that he offers

- So the question is – Do you *believe*? Do you believe . . .

That you are facing eternal death and punishment for your sin?

That when Jesus died on the cross, he died in *your* place (taking that punishment as *your* substitute) . . .

And then rose again for *your* life – full and forever?

Do you believe that, by faith? If so, you're on your way to resurrection life

- But not until you *repent* of your sin

B/c your sin and rebellion offends and grieves a holy God

Which is why you need to confess it to him, ask him to forgive you . . .

And turn from your old ways

That's what repentance means – a change of mind, to live God's way

You can live as he lives – if you believe, repent, and . . .

- *Receive* him as Lord of your life

Following his ways; Committing to his purposes; And drawing on his strength

That's the gospel, the message of Easter (**summary slide**)

That Jesus lives; And b/c he lives, you can too

Full of life, Free of fear; Filled with hope; And forgiven of sin

IF you believe, repent, and receive

If you're ready to do that, I'm going to give you an opp to respond in just a minute

But first, I want you to watch this **video** (*Graffiti* from the BGEA)

B/c it captures all of this as good as anything I've seen