

Celebrating Resurrection  
April 12, 2020

There is so much bad news these days that we need some good news to focus on. We would all love to hear the news of a vaccine to prevent catching the virus. We would welcome news of a medicine to help the infected heal from the virus. We want to hear that there are no new cases and the governor told everyone to go back to work!

But much of the news is bad news. And we hear questions. People are asking, "When will we get back to normal," and "What will normal be like after this?"

Once life is back to normal, there will still be bad news. Some lives have been permanently affected by this pandemic. Families have lost loved ones. Businesses will fail. Unemployment will take a while to come back down. The healthcare field is losing workers and may be shorthanded for a decade while new people are trained. The economy will take a while to get back to healthy levels. There will be more weather extremes and natural disasters. And no matter which way the presidential election goes it will be bad news for somebody.

**One of the questions you may be hearing is, "Where is God in all this?"**

The answer is that he is here with us. John 3:16 is still true. God still loves the world. God still loves us all, every person. And he is still offering forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. The basics we believe have not changed.

Some of you will remember a series of sermons I preached a few years ago entitled "Foundations." One point of that series was to set a foundation for such times as the current crisis. I told you that when you go through future times of loss, of feeling like you are near the end of your rope, when life makes no sense, to think back to those foundations of our faith.

The foundational truths of our theology start with God. "In the beginning, God..." God existed before the universe. God existed without the universe. And then God changed things. God created the world. We are not here by accident. God created on purpose. God has a goal. And all of human history is moving towards the fulfillment of that goal, including the present crisis.

Some people are wondering if there will ever be a world without bad news. The answer is yes.

**We were not made to live this life on this earth forever.** As descendants of Adam and Eve, we have inherited the penalty for their sin, which is death. However, in Jesus there is the offer of a new life on a new earth. And that WILL be forever. It will be heaven for us. We were made to be with God forever, but not in these deteriorating bodies. God means for us to be resurrected after death into our new bodies.

This starts with the death and resurrection of Jesus. All the best blessings God has planned for us are made possible because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So...

**Today, Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.** We need to remember, today, the foundation of our salvation, the resurrection of Jesus.

Resurrection has not always been the belief of all people. The ancient Jews did not know of a resurrection. They believed that everyone who died remained in the grave, a place called Sheol. To them, there was no life after death. There was just death.

The Greeks & Romans believed in life after death, but only as spirits, not as physical bodies. We see this belief in the attitude of some to Paul's preaching of the resurrection on Jesus in Acts 17.

**Acts 17:32 (NIV)**

**When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered..."**

They sneered because resurrection of a physical body did not fit what they believed.

By the first century AD many of the Jews did believe in a resurrection, based on the preaching of the prophets Isaiah, Daniel, and Hosea. Not all the Jews of the time yet believed in a coming resurrection. The most conservative group of the Jews, the Sadducees, believed that only the first five books of the Old Testament were inspired of God and authoritative. They saw nothing about resurrection in these books and rejected that teaching.

Today, Christians know the prophets brought God's message and we find them informing and inspiring. And they foretold a resurrection of all people. So...

**Today, we celebrate the predictions of resurrection.**

Isaiah, Daniel, and Hosea all predicted a future resurrection of all people. I will give just one example of this good news.

**Hosea 13:14 (NIV) "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?"**

Paul quotes this passage in his first letter to the Corinthian church. He says this prophecy will be fulfilled when we all are resurrected from the dead. He points out that we have confidence of being resurrected because Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus is the first.

**1 Corinthians 15:20 (NIV) Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

"Fallen asleep" is a figure of speech for death. Jesus was the first to be resurrected. And his resurrection is evidence for our coming resurrection. But it is evidence of much more.

**The resurrection of Jesus is evidence that he is Messiah.** Our Lord's resurrection from the dead was a proof that He is the Messiah.

The Jews of the first century were tired of being ruled by the Romans. They were only a few generations past being independent. They longed for that again, fueled by the prophecies of Isaiah. God promised them a Messiah, called his servant. We're going to look at just part of what Isaiah wrote.

**Isaiah 53:9-12 (NIV) He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the**

**suffering of his soul, he will see the (results) and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**

This passage details that the servant of Yahweh, the Messiah, will die, and yet will live to enjoy the results of his death. That can only happen if he is raised from the dead.

As the apostles of Jesus preached the resurrection from such passages, God's people responded with faith, recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.

### **The resurrection is also evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.**

One of the titles of the Messiah was Son of God. And the resurrection revealed Jesus to be the same. Paul describes this in his letter to the church at Rome.

**Romans 1:1-4 (NIV) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-- the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

This speaks to Jesus as the perfect high priest, representing fully both God and man to the other. He was fully God and fully man. As the Son of God he is the perfect mediator between us and God.

And... **The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for hope for our resurrection.**

We celebrate Christ's resurrection because his resurrection holds so many blessings for us.

**1 Corinthians 15:13-14 (NIV) If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**

**1 Corinthians 15:17 (NIV) If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.**

**1 Corinthians 15:20 (NIV) But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

And so our faith is NOT a waste of time. We are NO LONGER in our sins. Instead, before God we are dressed in the righteousness of Christ. We are clothes in his right relationship with the Father. We have great reason for the hope of our own resurrection because Jesus was raised from the dead.

All that we believe about Jesus hinges on his resurrection. All that we believe about salvation rests upon his resurrection. Most especially...

**Today, We celebrate the adequacy of the resurrection.**

The death and resurrection of Jesus go hand in hand. They are two parts of the answer to our sins. Jesus died to pay the penalty of our sin, all the sins of the world potentially. And we know

this to be true because God raised him from the dead. And in both we can be declared to have a right relationship with God. Justification is a legal term for someone accused of a crime in a court of law and pronounced innocent and free to go. It is used of us in Romans 4 in connection with the resurrection of Jesus.

**Romans 4:25 (NIV)**

**He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

Justification means that ALL charges against us have been settled and dismissed. We are free to go.

We who have put our faith in Christ are no longer “in our sins”. We are no longer charged with the crime of sin. We are at peace with God. All this we have through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Yes, we celebrate resurrection today. We could speak of the wonder of resurrection, the surprise of resurrection, the joy of resurrection, and other aspects of this great event.

The good news we need to lift us out of fear today is the resurrection of Jesus and all that it means for us.

While we keep hearing bad news, none of it is the worst news. The most life-destroying bad news is that we are all sinners, having sinned against God, and facing condemnation to hell.

The most life-hopeful good news is that there is forgiveness of all sin in Jesus. (Romans 4:24)

Believe today. Accept that Jesus died for your sins. Accept him as Lord of your life.