

The Story – Resurrection!

The unfolding story of redemption. That's what we've been talking about for the past year. God's plan to redeem us and bring us out of sin and back into a right relationship with God. We said last week this was done for us through the sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. **On the cross, Jesus died for us.** It was personal, for each and every one of us. On the night of his betrayal he handed the bread of the Passover meal to each of his disciples and said, "this is my body, given and broken for you." Jesus died for you.

On the cross, Jesus died in order to bring us to God. By his sacrificial death he made the way for us to be restored to a right relationship with God. Peter tells us, "**For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**" **1 Peter 3:18** Last Sunday we said He was the ransom paid to redeem us from slavery to sin and death. His death brings us to God.

On the cross, Jesus died for our sins. Our sins stood in the way of us being in right relationship with God. Our sins had to be dealt with and as we said last week, whatever needed to be done, we couldn't do it. Jesus died for our sins. The apostle Paul declared, "**For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...**" **1 Corinthians 15:3**

On the cross, Jesus died our death. The bible says "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" **Romans 6:23** Death came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as a result of their sin. Death then came to all through our sin. But Jesus died our death, the death we deserved because of our sins. Now, through faith in Christ as Savior and through his forgiveness, we receive the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All of this comes as a result of what we talked about last week, Jesus' death upon the cross, his crucifixion. But that's not all of the story. Look at the rest of that passage we just read from 1 Corinthians 15. "**For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.**" **1 Corinthians 15:3-6**

Jesus secured our redemption at Calvary, but it was confirmed, endorsed, validated, demonstrated and proclaimed by his resurrection from the dead! Don't let anyone minimize the importance of the resurrection in the story of our redemption. Some have said it doesn't matter if Jesus bodily rose from the dead, but that's not what the bible says. The resurrection is central to the story of redemption and to the Christian faith. Put simply, the resurrection is a big deal!

Eric Metaxas in his book *Miracles* writes, "In a hewn rock tomb just outside Jerusalem, the cosmos itself – and not just the material cosmos, but the temporal universe too, which is to say space and time both – pivoted and reversed course, undoing the curse of Death that had been upon us since the Garden of Eden." He continues, "The claim that this happened is not merely important to the Christian faith, it is superlatively central and crucial. According to the apostle Paul, if it did not actually happen, there is nothing more to discuss of Christianity at all. What Paul said was that if Christ was not actually and literally raised from the dead, Christian faith is useless. If that did not happen, our sins cannot be forgiven and washed away, so the central idea of Christian faith, that Jesus' death and resurrection fundamentally transforms and redeems each of us who put our faith in Him, evaporates. If he did not rise from the dead, we do not rise from the dead – and Death wins. In fact, Paul pointedly says that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, 'We are of all people most to be pitied.'" ...Eric Metaxas. Jesus' resurrection is a big deal! Let's look a little deeper at its importance. (Just about any time I talk about the resurrection, I need to credit the teaching of the late John Stott whom I often quote.)

We believe Jesus physically died and was buried. The Romans made sure he was dead. They were experts in crucifixion so there was no doubt he truly, physically was dead. Unlike the resurrection of Lazarus, or Jairus' daughter, or the widow's son, **The resurrection of Jesus was entirely unique!** He didn't just come back to life with the same physical body and then have to face death again at some point. Jesus' resurrection was a radical new beginning. Jesus could say "I was dead but I am now alive and will never die and I hold the keys of death and the grave." His resurrection resulted in a brand new body that would never die, a body that could seemingly pass through walls and yet could be seen, touched, that ate and drank. His resurrection resulted in a new body, the beginning of a new order. And while it had never happened before or since, because of his resurrection, one day it will happen to all of us who are trusting in Christ. That's why the bible says he rose from the dead as the first of all those who will be made alive. Paul writes, "**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have**

fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 Jesus’ death and resurrection were entirely unique and for us. But once again, why isn’t it enough that he died on the cross? Why is the resurrection so important to us?

Jesus’ resurrection assures us of God’s forgiveness. You remember a few weeks ago we talked about the man whose friends lowered him through the roof and the woman caught in the act of adultery. Jesus said to them, “your sins are forgiven.” That’s a nice thing to say to someone. Everyone wants to know that their mistakes of the past have been forgiven and washed away. But remember with the paralyzed man the Pharisees said, “No one can forgive sins but God alone. How can this man say your sins are forgiven?” Good question. If God alone can forgive sins and Jesus comes along saying our sins are forgiven, how can we know that for sure? How can we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross and that our sins have truly been atoned for? Without the resurrection, we could never know for sure!

But here is the reality: The victory won for us by Jesus at the cross can only be bestowed upon us by a risen Savior! John Stott said “By raising Jesus from the dead, God sets his seal of approval” on Jesus’ atoning death on the cross. The resurrection says His death was not in vain. The resurrection of Jesus says that God has accepted his sacrifice, that on the grounds of Jesus’ atoning death, there is a full and free pardon and forgiveness of sin for everyone who repents and believes in Jesus, the risen Christ!

The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Romans with “**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...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...**” **Romans 1:1-4** Declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead! Jesus’ resurrection validated his claims to be the Son of God. Think about it. Jesus told people he was giving his life as a ransom for us, that he would be crucified (for us and for our salvation) and then God would raise him from the dead three days after his execution. If he was wrong about this, then he was a lunatic, maybe a well-intentioned but crazy prophet. But if he was right, if he was the Son of God, the resurrection would be God’s way of validating and substantiating all the claims of Christ. The resurrection would prove the deity of Christ because obviously, if what Jesus was saying wasn’t the truth, God would have never raised him from the

dead. Jesus is declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. Everything Jesus said is validated by his resurrection and we have the assurance of forgiveness.

Do you ever lay awake at night and wonder if the bible is true? Is there really life after death? Are our loved ones who trusted in Christ really with Jesus? You know how I know it's true? Because Jesus said so and if he was right about this one thing, about God raising him from the dead...then he is right about everything he said!

Jesus' resurrection assures us of God's infinite power. The creation of the universe and the resurrection of Christ are the two defining things that demonstrate the supreme power of God. "Declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." Never before in the history of the world had this happened. History and experience from the beginning of time proved that men and women die and that was the end. But God's great power acted uniquely to raise Jesus from the dead and as we said earlier, not just to live and face death again, but raised as the first of a new kingdom of the redeemed!

Jesus' resurrection assures us of the supreme power of God. Not only is he able to raise Jesus from the dead, but he is able to give life to the spiritually dead. His resurrection power is able to make new creations out of sinners like us! He is able to make us alive to his truth, his calling, his grace. His power is able to turn selfish, greedy people into unselfish servants and givers. He is able to turn cruel, heartless people into kind and gentle lovers of Christ and others. He is able to turn the immoral and wicked into holy lovers of God and righteousness. This is the resurrection power of God at work in us, that he has saved us and brought us from the kingdom of death into the kingdom of life, from darkness to light. In Christ we have died to self, to the old life and have been resurrected to walk and live in a new life in Christ. We call it conversion. I once was something else, a sinner, a wretch, but in Christ a conversion has taken place and now I am a new creation, the old is gone and all things are new. That is his amazing grace delivered to me by the power of the resurrection.

The bible says, **"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Romans 8:11**

God's infinite power was demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and that same Spirit is at work in us, giving life to our mortal bodies. That same power, by the same

Holy Spirit, is making us spiritually alive. Our flesh may be declining, yet our inward man is being renewed by the Holy Spirit and that resurrection power at work in us!

Jesus' resurrection assures us of the ultimate triumph of God. We look around at the trouble, the injustice, the sickness and war and death. We talked a few weeks ago about the widow lady crying out for justice, wondering when it would come. This world is in bad shape and it keeps getting worse. We make a little progress here and there. We conquer a few diseases along the way, medical science makes some progress for which we are thankful, but we still can't conquer the diminishment that comes with age. We still can't conquer death. More importantly, we can't conquer our own sinfulness. We need a savior. This planet needs a savior. Society and our culture needs a Savior. Everywhere we see hopelessness, despair, violence, children trafficked for sadistic pleasure, immorality is glorified, confusion is celebrated as diversity and we think "how will this ever end?"

There seems to be very little hope, but think back to that Friday afternoon, the day we call Good Friday. Jesus, the only innocent, perfect, sinless man is dying unjustly upon a Roman cross. There is no hope in sight. The Centurion declares him dead and they remove his body from the cross and place it in a borrowed tomb. The Son of God, the one we believe to be our Savior and Redeemer is dead. There is no triumph to be found here. Everything looks hopeless, but as Tony Compolo's pastor once famously said, "That's because it's Friday, Sunday's coming!"

Jesus' resurrection shouts to us of triumph. Christ is risen! The tomb is empty! Death couldn't conquer him, hell couldn't hold him, the grave couldn't keep him. Out of defeat and despair comes the ultimate triumph and victory. His victory is our victory. His triumph over death is our assurance of triumph as well. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we live in hope! Because of his resurrection, neither Satan nor sin nor death will have the last word. Hell loses, the grave loses and we win. Jesus' resurrection assures us of that victory and ultimate triumph!

We are saved in hope of a whole new life, a whole new existence. We are promised in the Scripture a new heavens and a new earth, a new life, a new body like his glorious body that will never die. We groan and wait in hope for that day. But can we be sure of what's coming? That our bodies will be resurrected, that there will be a heavenly home prepared for us? How can we be sure? Because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead!

John saw Jesus in heavenly glory and heard him declare, **“I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive forevermore! And I hold the keys of hell and death.” Revelation 1:17-18** Jesus holds the keys of hell and death, indicating to us his ultimate triumph over every enemy, including death! His resurrection assures us of the ultimate fulfillment of every promise! The bible says, **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:3-4**

Jesus’ resurrection assures us of an inheritance awaiting us in heaven. His resurrection is the guarantee of what is to come for all who repent and place their faith in him as Savior and Lord. Listen to me, there is coming a day when we will stand in his presence, redeemed, restored, triumphant, victorious, every wrong made right, forever made whole, all things made new. How do I know for sure? Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, the first of all that will be raised to new life in him! What a Day That Will Be!