**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 2-5-2023
Resurrection – An Essential Truth**

The other day I was playing a board game with my oldest two daughters. And for whatever reason, we are missing the directions to this particular game.

Has that ever happened to you? Somehow the directions go missing?

But instead of just pitching the game, my daughters made up their own rules. I’m pretty sure that they are not the same as the actual rules for this game, for I vaguely remember things being a bit different playing this game a while back. But we had a very good time playing. At least I know I did, since somehow I won.

But in contrast to some games, where we can make up different rules all the time and still usually have a lot of fun and follow the main intention of the game, in contrast to this, there are some essential truths that are so foundational to our faith. These truths are non-negotiable and living according to these truths are critical to our growth as followers of Jesus Christ.

One such essential truth is the resurrection of the body. Whenever we affirm the Christian faith through the Apostle’s Creed, we profess our faith in both Jesus’ resurrection as well as the resurrection of everyone who has died when Jesus returns to earth.

Within the Corinthian church, though, this essential truth about the resurrection was being doubted and questioned. And what we find in the first part of today’s reading is Paul making it very clear that Jesus’ resurrection was an historic fact. It shouldn’t be spiritualized away as a pipe dream or something. Instead, Christians were to hold fast to this truth that happened in time and space.

Paul decides to have this instruction be the final main point of the entire lesson which we now call 1 Corinthians. Please now turn with me to God’s Word to hear what Paul has to say. We will be hearing first from 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. We will also be looking at verses 12-23 in a moment.

1 Cor. 15:1-8

**1Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**

**3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A1-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28722a)**]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Cephas,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A1-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28724b)**] and then to the Twelve. 6After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.**

These 8 verses make it abundantly clear that Jesus was physically resurrected from the dead. It happened right in Jerusalem on that third day after He was crucified. Jesus returned to His body and walked out of that empty tomb. Amen.

And this is not wishful thinking. This is historic fact. The evidence is overwhelming to this truth. Numerous people saw Him physically alive after His death. Even a group of over 500 people at one time, many of which were still living and could be interviewed to testify to this, were witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection.

Clearly, Jesus was physically alive. We are told in other Scriptures that He ate with His followers. He was not a ghost or some type of illusion. Jesus was physically resurrection. And not only that, He was glorified. We see Jesus now doing things in His body that He didn’t do before. He disappeared on more than one occasion. He walks through doors.

It is the same Jesus, but His mortal body was clothed with immortality after His physical resurrection. He was the same and yet He was changed.

And Paul then seeks to explain to the Corinthians that the future resurrection of believers is just as certain as the resurrection of Jesus that had taken place 25 years earlier. It is just as certain. It just hasn’t happened yet.

Apparently, as some of those who came to faith in Christ had since died, others were wondering if this whole resurrection thing is truly a real thing. Perhaps it had been months or years since these believers had passed away – certainly a longer time than the 3 days between Jesus’ death and the resurrection.

Let’s now turn to verses 12-23 and we will soon see how critical this essential truth of the resurrection of Christians is.

Paul writes, **12But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

**20But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**

There is a lot going on in these verses. But the big thing that Paul wants to make crystal clear is that the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus’ followers are linked together. **They are either both true or both false**.

And clearly, Jesus’ resurrection happened. It is an historical fact based on the evidence. And because Jesus’ resurrection had occurred, Jesus’ followers were to have certainty that when Jesus returns, He would raise up all who put their truth in Him.

Paul is arguing that while the general resurrection has not happened yet, it is a certainty that it will occur. Why? Because of Jesus’ resurrection having happened. They were called to have a confident hope of what will happen based on what already did happen. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything!

Now why is this an essential truth? Why? Because as Paul writes, For **if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.**

Do you see how everything hinges on the victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ? Everything is connected here. The LORD is telling these Christians in Corinth that they needed to believe in their own physical resurrection just as much as they believe in Jesus’ resurrection. They go hand and hand. His resurrection was proof that everyone will be raised.

Paul then goes on to describe questions that may arise in the minds of some of the Corinthians. Questions like “How will God raise the God?” And “What kind of body will they have?”

And Paul basically says that these are foolish things to ask. It was nothing to raise Jesus and it will be nothing for God to raise all of those who believe in Jesus. It is a piece of cake for God to do this. Just as it was a piece of cake to raise Jesus, it will be a piece of cake to raise everyone.

And when that happens, the Corinthians are told, their mortal bodies will be transformed to become immortal. They will be glorified to be like Christ in His glorified body.

So what is the big idea for us today, many centuries after Paul wrote these words? And I think it is this. **We are to be people of hope who are excited for an amazing future because of the victory of Jesus.**

And this hope is grounded in nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness and the fact of Jesus’ resurrection.

For us today living in the 21st century, there have been Christians that have been physically dead awaiting their own resurrection for about 2,000 years. But whether Christ returns tomorrow or 2,000 more years pass until then, we are all called to have a confident hope that we will be raised just as Jesus was raised.

And if He returns while we are still in our mortal bodies, we should have confidence that our mortal bodies will be clothed with immortality at His return to earth.

Additionally, it must also be added that while we must hold fast to the truth of the resurrection – both Jesus and everyone else’s -- at the same time Paul makes it very clear to the Corinthian Christians that Christians who are absent from the body are present with the Lord.

For our loved ones that knew Jesus and are away from their body in heaven, please know that they are doing well. Heaven is an amazing place. A place of indescribable joy and peace. A place of singing and worship and laughter. A place of rest and play. In 2 Corinthians, Paul shares that he was once caught up to heaven in a vision and saw unspeakably amazing things. It was better than he could put into words.

Heaven will not be boring and, like Paul, I do not believe that it will feel disembodied or lacking there.

But as amazing as heaven is and will be, it is not the end either. Eventually, heaven and earth will be reunited when Christ comes back to the earth. At this time, our physical earthly bodies will be resurrected and glorified. And our eternity will be a very physical one on this new earth that God will make or re-make in some way.

While it is true that we do not know all the details, all of us should be filled with hope for a bright and beautiful and exciting future.

Again, we are to be people of hope. People brimming with hope. While physical death is still an enemy, it is an enemy not to be feared, for we share in the victory of Christ. The best is yet to be.

It light of these essential truths that we are to be grounded in, it baffles me sometimes when Christians say things like “any day above ground is a good day.” That doesn’t sound like they are living into the hope filled future that is our inheritance in Jesus Christ. Christians should not be like the secular materialists, who do not live with hope.

So friends, let us live our lives to the fullest for Jesus right here and now. But always remember the best is truly yet to be for God’s people. So may we hold fast to this essential truth as we seek to keep our eyes on Jesus each day.

In closing hear these words, also written by Paul. And may these words spur us onward in our walk with Jesus.

Paul states, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Friends, may this be true for us and for all God’s people. May we be people filled with hope, even in the midst of the broken world in which we live. Amen.

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