

## It's the Resurrection

John 19:38-20:9

April 17, 2022

Welcome again to worship. I want to invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal, your Bible, and turn to the end of John 19.

READ JOHN 19:38-42 AND JOHN 20:1-9:

We tend to be a little confused about all this Holy Week stuff.

There once was a Bulletin Blooper: "This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar."

A group of four-year-old children were gathered in a Sunday school class. The teacher looked at the class and asked this question: "Does anyone know what last Sunday was?"

A little four-year-old girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, it was Palm Sunday."

The teacher exclaimed, "That's fantastic, that's wonderful. Now does anyone know what today is?"

The same little girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, today is Easter Sunday."

Once again, the teacher said, "That's fantastic. Now, does anyone know what makes today Easter?"

The same little girl responded and said, "Yes, today is Easter because Jesus rose from the grave" and before the teacher could congratulate her, she kept on talking and said, "but if He sees his shadow, He has to go back in for 7 weeks."

We tend to be a little confused about all this Holy Week stuff. There are so many different things that happen. We move from the high emotion of a day called "Palm Sunday," to the lowest point of the week called "Good Friday," that really doesn't sound good at all, then back to celebration today, "Easter Sunday." It is all quite confusing, or maybe it's just that we gave up chocolate for Lent and today we are a bit of a sugar buzz.

We are uncertain not only of the events of Holy Week, but in fact the validity and relevance of the events. A poll of Americans reported that a vast majority believe in God, are religious, and believe Jesus died on a cross, yet only 15% believe He rose from the dead.

I read about a letter to an advice column:

Dear Advice: Our preacher said on Easter that Jesus didn't die on the cross. He just swooned and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?  
Sincerely, Bewildered

Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; put him in a sealed tomb for 36 hours and see what happens. Sincerely, Advice.

Now, I don't want any of you getting any ideas about what to do with your preacher!

I was amazed that in that poll, so many people said they believed in God, and so many said they were religious, but do not believe in the resurrection.

It seems to me that here is what separates what we do with this Jesus. We know that He was a good man, an insightful teacher, who had many miracles attributed to

Him. He had a wonderful way with people, the ability to touch ever so gently the soul of the downcast, yet convict a heart of stone. But He faced opposition, and that opposition was stronger than His supporters, and like many a good man or woman, He was killed for what He believed and taught. We believe that, but moving from death to life, that's quite a stretch. It is quite a jump from Calvary to an empty tomb.

It's no wonder that people have trouble with the resurrection; so did Jesus' followers. Consider those persons in our Scripture lesson this morning: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both leaders in the Jewish religious groups, were secret followers of Jesus; with very caring acts, they gave Jesus a grave and anointed his body. Once again, rich men went to Jesus, first at His birth, and now at His death. But they did not have to go to such elaborate lengths for Jesus, especially since He rose from the dead.

What about Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus had rescued from a life of demon possession? She went to the tomb, but finding the stone removed, she ran away.

Peter and the other disciple, whom tradition names as the author of this book, the disciple John, heard Mary's announcement and ran to the tomb to check it out for themselves. John arrived first, and simply looked in, but bold Peter went straight into the empty tomb. Yet they were still troubled.

What makes us any different from those who walked with Jesus. Every man and woman on this planet of ours is at one stage or level of belief regarding the resurrection of Jesus. Either they think it is a fabrication, like Mary did. She said:

*"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"<sup>1</sup>*

Or they, like Peter, have to check out the facts and still be puzzled about what happened. Or people, when they encounter Jesus personally, are able to accept the fact of the resurrection, as Mary did later in the garden as well as the disciples behind locked doors. Then there are those, after they have committed themselves to the risen Lord and devoted their lives to serving him, have begun to understand the full reality of his presence with them, as doubting Thomas finally did a full week after Easter morning.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Without it the believer has no hope for this life or for the life to come.

The apostle Paul wrote:

*And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.<sup>2</sup>*

Our belief in this great teaching is not based upon some religious feeling or upon an unfounded idea about what may have happened in the past. Nor are we talking about an isolated rumor, but about a historical fact with solid evidence to support it.

A group of lawyers once met in England to discuss the biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection. They wanted to see if sufficient information was available to make a case that would hold up in an English court of law. When their study was completed, they concluded that Christ's resurrection was one of the most well-established facts of history!

G. B. Hardy wrote some thought-provoking questions about the resurrection. "There are but two essential requirements: 1. Has anyone cheated death and proved it?

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:2 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT2)

2. Is it available to me? Here is the complete record: Confucius' tomb - occupied. Buddha's tomb - occupied. Mohammed's tomb - occupied. Jesus' tomb - empty! Argue as you will, there is no point in following a loser."

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a reality. Countless changed lives testify that it's a fact - not a fable! Despite what some people say, even supposed Christians in our own denomination, pastors and Bishops who do not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection actually happened.

But the question can then be asked, "Why is the resurrection so important? Why is it the key to Christian faith?"

**First, just as He said, Jesus rose from the dead.**

Listen to Mark 8:

*Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead.<sup>3</sup>*

Two other times, He stated the exact same thing. If the disciples had half a brain, they would not have feared so. He foretold He would die, then said He would rise from the dead.

If, therefore, He predicted His resurrection, we then can be confident that He will accomplish **all** He has promised. If He could come through on that promise, you can trust Him and what He says.

**Second, Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ, not a false prophet or impostor, is ruler of God's eternal kingdom.**

Romans 1:4 reads:

*and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>4</sup>*

He could say all He wanted while He was alive, but without the resurrection, He could not back them up. The resurrection proves He is Lord of all. He is the only One we can turn to for salvation. He is the only One we can turn to for meaning and purpose. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Third, we can be certain of our own resurrection because Jesus was resurrected.**

Romans 6 says:

*And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.<sup>5</sup>*

1 Corinthians 6:14

*By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.<sup>6</sup>*

God raised Christ from the grave, as a pledge of our resurrection, and will also raise us up by that same power, that we may dwell with Him in glory forever.

Death is not the end. There is a future life.

**Fourth, the divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.**

The Bible says:

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<sup>3</sup> Mark 8:31 (NLT2)

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:4 (NLT2)

<sup>5</sup> Romans 6:4b (NLT2)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV)

*You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.<sup>7</sup>*

Before we believed in Christ, our nature was evil. We disobeyed, rebelled, and ignored God. Even at our best, we did not love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. The Christian, however, has a new nature. God has crucified the old rebellious nature<sup>8</sup> and replaced it with a new loving nature.<sup>9</sup> The penalty of sin died with Christ on the cross. God has declared us not guilty, and we need no longer live under sin's power. Now we are free to live for Christ.<sup>10</sup>

My life changed when I gave it to God. 50 years as of March of walking with the Lord, and it has been abundant life.

**Finally, the resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world.**

The Apostle Paul wrote near the end of his life:

*Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.<sup>11</sup>*

The message of Christianity has always been the resurrection. We are the only faith that claims such an audacious belief, and as such, we are the only ones who can offer people hope, real and true hope. No matter what the world has done to you; no matter what you have done to yourself; there is hope in Christ.

Let me ask you something: do you need these resurrection truths in your life? Do you need to know that His promises for you are true? Have you been following impostors, like lemmings following a crazy cult leader, instead of true, living Christ? Do you need the assurance that your life is not in vain, that there is something else? Do you need to experience the same resurrection power in your life today?

Have you ever traveled along a road or interstate and noticed on a nearby hill three crosses? Myron J. Taylor preached a sermon entitled "A Hill With Three Crosses." He said that one cross portrays a thief dying *IN* sin, and the other a thief dying *TO* sin. But the center cross speaks of the Redeemer dying *FOR* sin. It divides all humanity into one of two categories - those who reject Christ and die in sin, and those who receive Christ and can die to sin.

Will you allow these keys to the Christian faith to open the door to your heart today? Will you be like the religious authorities who killed Jesus, certain that you are doing the right thing, and certainly going to hell? Will you stay in the shadows like the disciples did, hiding because they did not understand the meaning and power of the resurrection? Jesus made that impossible journey from Mt. Calvary, the place of death, to an empty garden tomb, the place of life, for your sins and mine, so that we too might have eternal life. There has already been one resurrection today, one life brought back from the dead. How about you?

**NOBODY BUT JESUS VIDEO.**

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<sup>7</sup> Colossians 2:13-14 (NLT2)

<sup>8</sup> Romans 6:6

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 3:9,10

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 2:8 (NLT2)