

Resurrection Sunday FEFC 4-16-2017

RAISED TO LIFE

by Pastor Michael Thompson

INTRODUCTION

Today we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of Good Friday could be thought of as the hard work of saving mankind from sin. Resurrection Sunday could be thought of as the outward proof that it worked.

Jesus Christ prophesied that He would rise bodily from the dead after 3 days. If he did not rise Jesus would be thought of to this day as a false prophet, a liar and a sinner.

Jesus Christ DID rise from the dead. Here is Luke's account of the resurrection;

Luke 24 1-9

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices, which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶"He is not here, but He has risen Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." ⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

The resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, which is why many 1st century churches began meeting on Sunday to honor the resurrection.

Speaking of the resurrection, notice the words of the angel in verse 6. **He is not here.** Jesus is not dead. Three days after his crucifixion, Jesus proved that he was alive when he appeared to His followers, and Jesus is alive today and forever. It's not that the angels rolled away the stone to let Jesus out. They rolled away the stone to show that He was already gone. No tomb can hold Him.

HE APPEARED TO MANY

Jesus proved his resurrection was true by appearing over 40 days to his followers. In every other religion some self appointed prophet claimed to have a vision or dream. They told people about their vision or dream and people follow by blind faith. No one can verify the vision or dreams of Joseph Smith or Muhammad or David Koresh or any cult leader. You have to take their word for it. But Jesus rose from the dead. And His witnesses are the ones that told the world about what they saw. Jesus Christ and His resurrection have been verified.

His physical appearances gave boldness to the apostles. Remember Peter denying Christ 3 times before the resurrection. But after the resurrection he had boldness and faith to never deny Jesus. Because He rose His follower knew that Jesus Christ truly is the Messiah, The Son of God.

IT HAD NEVER BEEN DONE

It would be difficult to believe that we will rise from the dead if no one had ever done it. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead just prior to His death and then Jesus rose from the dead Himself. Jesus is the living proof of resurrection to eternal life. Lazarus was the proof that resurrection is not just for Jesus. He can and will raise mere mortals from the grave.

1 Corinthians 6:14

By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

Jesus is called the first fruits from among the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

In a harvest first fruits were picked first as a sample of the whole crop. If you pick some samples from your corn field you know that the rest of the crop will look the same as the first fruits or the sample pick.

Jesus Christ is the first fruit, or that sample pick of the resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead, he is the first sample of what will happen to the rest of us.

HOW CAN I BE SURE?

You are giving me some interesting facts Pastor Mike, but how can I be sure Jesus rose from the dead? People are saying all kinds of things about Him. Some say the body was hidden. Others say the bible is not reliable.

First there are many Christian and non Christian historical records that document the death of Jesus. The death of Jesus is fairly easy to substantiate. But how do we know He rose again?

You can be certain Jesus rose because after His resurrection;

Jesus appeared to:

- Mary Magdalene – **Mark 16:9-11**
- Other women at the tomb – **Matthew 28:8-10**
- Peter in Jerusalem – **Luke 24:34**
- Two Travelers on the Road – **Mark 16:12-13**
- Ten disciples behind closed doors but **Luke 24:36-43**
- All eleven disciples – **Mark 16:14**
- 7 disciples while fishing on the Sea of Galilee–**John 21:1-14**
- Eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee-**Matthew 28:16-20**
- A crowd of 500 – **1 Corinthians 15:6**
- Jesus' brother James – **1 Corinthians 15:7**
- Those who watched Jesus ascend into heaven – **Mark 16:19-20**
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In addition there were a large group of Roman soldiers who were assigned to make sure no one stole His body. The strongest and most well equipped soldiers on earth against fishermen, accountants and women. The soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus faced severe punishment if the grave was disturbed in any way. It had a seal. And if that seal was broken the soldier would be in huge trouble.

Let's put this in terms we can understand. Imagine The head of Isis were captured and killed. But our intelligence were concerned that his men would come and steal the body to make it seem as if he were not dead. So we put a heavily armed Marine Squad of a dozen soldiers to guard the sealed storage locker in which the body lay. The soldiers are on a rotation so they do not fall asleep on duty. How likely is it that someone is going to sneak past these guys and carry the body away without a single gunshot? There is just above zero percent chance of that occurring. No one stole the body. Especially fishermen with no military training.

The other proof of the resurrection is the Holy Spirit. Jesus was risen and He promised that He would send His Spirit. If you sense the Holy Spirit at work on your heart you have proof of the resurrection.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION

Let's change our focus a bit to discuss the implications of the resurrection. What if there were no resurrection?

1 Corinthians 15:16-18

¹⁶ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished!

JESUS IS OUR "GO BETWEEN" OR MEDIATOR

The bible says that we have one mediator that helps us in our relationship with God. And that mediator is Jesus Christ. That means that if we want to talk to God we must go through Jesus Christ and then God will listen to our prayers. Further, if Jesus were not alive we would have no one to tell the Father that the death of Jesus applies to specific people.

So imagine there is no resurrection and we approach God in prayer and ask Him to be merciful on us forgiving our sins so that we can go to heaven. On our death bed we cry out to the Father. But if Jesus were not alive He would not be able to vouch for us to the Father. He would not be able to say;

"Father, I died for the sin of Mike Thompson. I paid His price and He has receive me as Lord and Savior. I can vouch for Him Father."

If Jesus were not raised and He were still dead then think about approaching our Holy God. Think about all the things that the Father knows about us. He knows about every rule we've broken. He knows every lie we've told. He knows about every drunken binge or every viewing of porn and every time we raised our hand in anger and every time we verbally abused someone. He knows about every time we've gossiped and slandered others.

Because of our sin we have lost our right to approach God on our own. We need Jesus to serve as an advocate and mediator in order to approach The Father.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 (NIV)

⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

John 14:6 (NIV)

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If Jesus were still dead we could not come anywhere near the Father or His heaven.

Jesus is 100 % God and 100 % man in one person. He is the perfect mediator between us and God. We don't need a priest or a prophet or pastor or anyone to be a "go between" to talk to God for us. We have the best mediator we could ever have, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And Jesus is alive and He knows who has come to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ lives we do not have to hide from God. We can go with confidence to the Father through His Son. Because Jesus Christ lives we can;

Hebrews 4:16

... approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

NO MORE ACHES AND PAINS

Another benefit of the resurrection is that we will have new bodies with no aches, pains or diseases. We will rise from the dead with glorified and healed bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:42

The Resurrection Body

⁴² Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die.

The bodies that we will be given at the return of Jesus Christ will be different. We will not get sick and we will never die. No more pain, sickness, death, and our sin nature will be gone. No more wrestling with sin and a divided heart.

THE WORST POSSIBLE THING

Another benefit of the resurrection is that we can avoid the worst possible thing. The worst thing that can happen to a person is death. Death has always been the great enemy of humanity.

OUR GREATEST FEAR

Jesus said to the person on the cross that died next to him, ***“today you will be with me in paradise.”***

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has solved the greatest problem any human could have. By His resurrection Jesus Christ has taken the sting out of death. He has swallowed up death in victory. All who are born again will rise again. For the Christian, this life is a pit stop. For the Christian, death is nothing more than a blink of the eyes and then paradise.

If you are not certain that you are going to heaven when you die then you can take care of business with God today and God will defeat the fear of death in you. He will replace the fear you have with His joy... because you can know Jesus Christ and His pardon of your sin.

FRIDAY AND SUNDAY GO TOGETHER

It is one thing to know about the resurrection in our heads. But the way that we take hold of this promise of living forever is to receive the gift of Good Friday. On Good Friday Jesus Christ died for our sins. Because of our sins we deserve eternal separation from God. The bible tells us the wages of sin is death.

Before the death of Jesus Christ all of the wrath and anger of a holy God was aimed directly our way. But then on Good Friday Jesus Christ the perfect Son of God took on our sins. He chose to be killed for our sins and to pay the death penalty that we deserved for our sin.

And the Father poured out His rejection and wrath and anger over our sin upon His only Son.

The bible says in **1 John 1:9 if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Today is a good day to say yes to the offer of Jesus. He will forgive your sins if you ask Him. And if God has caused your heart to long for Jesus and if you desire more than anything to be close to Him then cry out to Jesus asking Him to save you and forgive you. He has not saved you to hang onto your same life. He has saved you to life for His glory as you use the gifts and talents and passion He has given you.

What better day than Resurrection Sunday to secure your own promise that you too will be raised with Jesus from the dead? Today is a good day to begin living forever. If you are not sure that you have taken hold of eternal life, you can be certain. I would love to pray with you and speak with you about that.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Did you realize the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the only means of approaching God for help and salvation?
2. Did you realize the resurrection is the primary means of proving that Jesus Christ told the truth about everything?
3. Did you realize that because Jesus rose, it is possible for us to also rise from the dead.
4. Is God creating a desire to cry out to Him today? Don't live your life one more moment apart from the resurrection power of Jesus that can live in you.