

# The Power of Resurrection

## Sermon 4-16-17

### Pastor Curtis Dehmey

#### 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

*Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. <sup>3</sup>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>4</sup> and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.*

*<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. <sup>15</sup>We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup>If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

#### Message:

(Play Video at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/61871/return-of-the-king>) Long live the King. Do we believe in the risen king? Or do we believe in a dead king? Do we believe that the dead can be raised? Or do we believe that the dead stay dead? Are we all the walking dead? Doomed to a fate of despair and destruction. Just merely people moving about meaninglessly and wandering. A

few months ago I was watching a video by Mark Batterson. Mark was giving some instruction to preachers. Mark was very bold in this video. He posed the question, “Why are your sermons so boring?” He responded to his own question, “Maybe it’s because you’re living a boring life.” Ouch. But as harsh as that statement is, isn’t there a lot of truth to that? Is our faith in Jesus dead? Is it a boring faith? If we are bored with our faith in Jesus, isn’t that a call to live a bolder, more lively faith. That if we want others to see and know Jesus, it requires us to live in ways that might be risky. That may be “out there.” Are we just merely lifeless, walking dead, zombie-like, boring Christians who hold to a vibrant faith experience that was eons ago rather than an alive, exciting, exhilarating, victorious and resurrected faith today?

Paul certainly lived this lively and exciting faith. When Paul writes letters, he always puts the most important stuff at the front and at the end of the letter. Our passage today comes at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians. Therefore, this stuff is of the utmost importance to Paul. As it should be. Starting in verse 1, “Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you— unless you have come to believe in vain.” Many of us know the message we are hearing today. We know that Christ dies on the cross and then 3 days later rises from the dead. We know the story. But as Paul says, have we come to believe in vain? Meaning, does it really mean anything? Does it have any power in our life today? Or is it some by-gone story that is more like a fairytale than something alive and breathing?

Paul recalls the story we all know very well, “<sup>3</sup>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>4</sup>and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,<sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas [or Peter], then to the twelve.<sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.<sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.<sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” We know this story. We know that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead. He walked among the people until his ascension into heaven at the beginning of the Book of Acts. And we know that Jesus stopped Paul on that Damascus road from persecuting Christians and showed Paul the way. We know the story. We know about Jesus. But do we truly know him? Is our faith just a remnant of something that happened to us long ago? Some transformation experience that happened long ago? The salvation experience that happened long ago? If someone were to ask you, “what evidence do you have that

Jesus is alive in your life?” What evidence do you have that Jesus is alive in your life? What would your response be?

One of the parts I love about this passage, is how Paul weaves his story into Jesus’ story. Starting in verse 9, “<sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.” So it’s not just Paul recalling some old story of someone else. Paul sees his story in Jesus’ story. He recognizes that he once was living in sin and doing wrong. And that he required redemption. The sin Paul was committing was deathly. Both figuratively and literally. Paul was killing people before his conversion. The same sin that nailed Jesus to the cross and Jesus died for, is the same sin that Paul needed redemption and resurrection from. Sin moves us closer to death. Belief in Jesus, means an alive and resurrected life. A life full of grace. As we look at our own lives, how does our story weave into Jesus’ story? How does our story weave into Jesus’ story? If you’ve accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior, how have you been redeemed? How have you been resurrected? And I’m not just talking about some distant past story. How have you experienced the resurrected life of Jesus recently? That’s one of the markers of an alive and exciting faith. That we can witness on a regular basis the power of Christ’s resurrection in our lives. That we are continually being redeemed.

Paul understood this. If we do not believe that the worst of us can be resurrected from the most deathly of sins, then we do not understand the resurrection of Christ. Nor do we believe in Him. “<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. <sup>15</sup>We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.” Can the dead be raised? By the power of God, can God raise the dead? Both literally and figuratively. Jesus surely did it with Lazarus. And if we believe at all in Jesus, then, yes, the dead can be resurrected. The worst of us can be redeemed. “<sup>17</sup>If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” If we believed in this stuff at one point and don’t believe in it anymore, then all who have suffered in Christ’s name have done so in vain. Then there is no meaning to it. Some may say that what we believe is a figment of our imagination. Or its just

human nature's way of trying to make sense of irrational things. I don't know. Maybe this is just some silly story. Maybe we are all out of our minds. But if you have experienced the power of resurrection, then you know that there is no way this is false. You would die with this belief. You have been so changed and dramatically transformed that your belief in Christ is not on the periphery of your being, but is at the core of who you are. And if your faith in the power of Jesus' resurrection is still alive, then you must have resurrection stories all throughout your life. As Paul Sampley puts it, "If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then at stake is not just some wrong belief, some erroneous idea, but faith has lost its power—'your faith is powerless—and there are disastrous consequences: 'you are still in your sins,' those who have died in Christ have perished, and the struggles and labor of daily life have no meaning. Faith is the powerfully established, powerfully effective, and productive right relationship to God."

When I look at my life, the most recent example of resurrection is my finances. You've heard me talk about this before. I entered marriage with a lot of sinful debt. Thankfully, Christine has been really gracious with me. I remember the night that Christine and I sat in the car praying about our finances. I remember confessing to the Lord my sin of financial gluttony. Always wanting what everyone else had. Always trying to keep up with the spending habits of my peers. My vanity of wanting to be liked. I'm reminded on a weekly and monthly basis of how God is redeeming me in this area. I don't deserve it. I deserve to drown in my debt. But God has been gracious. I am being resurrected from my sin to new life in this area. I couldn't do it without the power of resurrection in Christ. We cannot find redemption apart from the resurrection of Christ.

And this should cause us to celebrate. To celebrate in victory. According to the Irish Times, when Queen Elizabeth dies, BBC will suspend all comedy programming for 12 days after her death. There will be no laughing in England. It's interesting that they've pre-ordained a particular response for the people to have of Queen Elizabeth. But here's the thing, if you love your leader, you'll mourn their death. If you hate your leader, you'll likely celebrate their death. However, with the death of Jesus everything is backwards. Those who love King Jesus do not observe his death with mourning but with celebration. We know it's not final. We know it means victory. There is much joy around his death because we have his resurrection.

We see these different reactions as we look across the gospels. In Mark 16:8 after Mary and the others heard from the Angel at the tomb, "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." In Mark's version, the women were afraid to tell. In Matthew's version, Matthew 28:8, "So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples." In Luke's version, Luke

24:10-11, “Now it was Mary Magdalene , Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” Fear. Joy. Disbelief. How are we reacting to the resurrection of Jesus?

Is our faith alive or dead in Jesus? Are we living the resurrected life? It's that simple. Paul could easily weave his resurrection story with Christ's resurrection story. Can you recall that last time you experienced Christ's resurrection in your life? Redemption from sin? Because if this stuff is true. If we believe people can be raised from the dead as Christ has been raised from the dead, then we should also have a resurrection story. If there is power in Christ's resurrection, then it should move us not to a humdrum dead faith, a walking dead faith. But a faith that is vibrant. A faith that is alive. A faith that is exhilarating. A faith that is not boring. A faith that is seeking the resurrected life in Jesus Christ. Are you living the resurrected life? Amen.