



# THE JOURNEY CHURCH

**SERMON GUIDE 4.16.2022**

**WEEKEND OF HOPE 2022 - EASTER SUNDAY**

**The Christian's Hope**

**SCRIPTURE:**

1 Corinthians 15:1-28

**RECAP:**

Happy Resurrection Sunday everyone! Every Sunday is technically Resurrection Sunday because that's why we meet on Sundays...the day Jesus rose from the grave. We are so glad to have you with us today to celebrate this awesome day. The message of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is something we remember annually on Easter, but the truth claims of this message is the daily bedrock of our faith and sustains each day. Our message today are the basics of the Christian hope, yet their depths are so extravagant and profound that if we would truly let them grip us and capture us we would never be the same.

Because I hold a conviction that this message and the truths that comprise it are the most important things we can grasp and live for in our lives, I want to ensure that we all understand the significance of what we're here to celebrate today.

IMAGINE SHOWING UP TO A PARTY YOU'RE INVITED TO AND EVERYONE IS CELEBRATING SOMETHING AND THEY TELL YOU WHAT IT IS BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE A LOT OF SENSE, YET THESE PEOPLE ARE REALLY EXCITED & YOU CAN TELL IT IS GENUINE, BUT YOU JUST HAVEN'T MADE THE CONNECTION AS TO WHAT THEY'RE CELEBRATING.

I think our churches can be like that sometimes, especially on Easter Sunday. We have people come and they show up and see genuine celebration, and they're told what is

being celebrated, but they don't really understand or haven't connected what is so celebration worthy.

*"So are we celebrating his death or his resurrection?"*

*"Both" they are told.*

*"We are celebrating the fact that this guy died and that he is alive?"*

*"Yes" we affirm.*

*"But why does something that happened 2,000 years ago have anything to do with me today?"*

You're invited to more than showing up for the party. I want you to understand what the celebration is about! I don't think we as Christians have done a great job explaining to others what Christianity is all about. When we tell people that we believe Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead on the third day, some people have no idea what that even means. They don't know who Jesus is and why it matters that he did anything. They don't know what a cross is and why it's significant. They don't understand what you mean by "your sins." And on top of all of that they don't understand what him coming back alive again would have to do with any of it. In other words, "okay, I hear what you're saying, and it might be true, but so what?" "Why does any of this matter to me, today?"

By God's grace, I'm going to try and show why Jesus' death and resurrection cause us to celebrate, and how they shape everything about the life of the Christian. The core issue we are going to address this morning, as we contemplate these issues is this: **If Jesus did not die for sin, then we will all face the wrath of God when we die, and if he is not raised from the dead, his death was meaningless & our faith is worthless.** And as the apostle Paul says, "we are to be most pitied."

Somebody asked a question on Twitter several weeks ago to this effect: "If we discovered definitively that Jesus had not been raised from the dead, how would it change your faith?" And, guys, the number of professing believers who essentially said, "Nothing, I'd keep trying to live by the example Jesus gave." No sir. I pray that you guys would answer very differently. I'm going to try to help you answer very differently today. The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection is at the foundation of Christianity. Remove this foundation and the whole fabric falls, all our hopes for eternity sink at once.

1 Corinthians 15:1-28 (ESV)

### **I. The Message (vs 1-11)**

V1-2 - Paul is closing his letter with a reminder to this church that he poured his time, energy, and heart to seeing established, to not abandon the gospel that he had first preached to them. He reminds them that this is the gospel that they received, stand on, and were saved by - if they hold to it. He then recaps what that message is:

V3-4 - The message preached is that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

**Isaiah 53:1-6 (ESV) - *1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

Because God is Just and Righteous, He must punish sins. In order for a person to have fellowship with God, to be in right-standing, something or someone had to sacrifice for sin. Throughout the Old Testament sacrifices were made for sin by using animals. The hope and the promise, as we have just read from the Isaiah text, is that one day there would be a once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin. God was going to send a Savior who would bear the sins of man and drink dry the cup of God's wrath toward sin. This is the message preached concerning Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. He had to die in order to be a sacrifice.

**Hebrews 9:22 (ESV) - *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.***

So Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly left the comforts of heaven and stepped into earth in the form of a man, born of a virgin (so as to be without original sin), lived a sinless life (so he could be our perfect sacrifice without blemish), and died on the cross (substituting himself in our place).

We also see that the message is that he was buried and raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. What Scriptures foretold the resurrection?

**Psalm 16:10 (ESV) -- *For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.***

We also see a theme in the Old Testament of new life or a raising up occurring on the third day.

**Hosea 6:2 (ESV) -- *After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.***

The story of Jonah is another example. Jesus himself when asked to give a sign of his authority and the validity of his claims from a group of religious leaders, he told them:

**Matthew 12:39-40 (ESV)-- *39 But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.***

So Paul reminds the Corinth Church of the message they were told when he first came and why it is still relevant for them. Jesus Christ died for sin. He was the substitutionary sacrifice given for the requirement of sin's payment. Upon his death he was buried and on the third day rose again - defeating Satan, sin, and death. This is the gospel message. This is what Paul gave his life to making known. Now why would Paul or anyone else spend their life going around telling this message? What reason would they have?

Misconceptions:

1. Some think for power. Yet these men were not powerful rulers, they experienced brutal & humiliating deaths.
2. Some think it was for fame. These men were revered by a small few, most thought them to be crazy and foolish.
3. Some think it was for money. These men had nothing. No homes to rest in or pantries with food. They lived on the generosity of other believers in all things.
4. Some think it was to start their own religion. The easiest thing for them to do would be to conform their beliefs to Judaism (where they had come from) or to even create

Christianity as part of the polytheistic Greco-Roman culture. These would have been easy things to do. But they didn't. They felt bound to the truths they had encountered. They were not entrepreneur men trying to jumpstart a new religion.

There can be more of these or a combination of any of them, and yet, none of them hit anywhere close to why these men (apostles) were willing to risk and give their lives to going around and telling this strange message about a man in an obscure part of the world who died and was raised from the dead. Only one reason explains what drove them: they saw him alive!

V5-8 - Paul reminds them that this is not some whimsical claim that is being made (that Jesus is alive!), but rather it is grounded on the evidence of witnesses who have seen him. Paul reminds them that Jesus appeared to Peter and the disciples, he appeared to over 500 witnesses (most of whom were still alive). Paul says this in order to say, "go ask around, remind yourself quickly that there are people who touched and conversed with the God-Man who was killed but alive again!" This would obviously be a claim he would never make if it were not true. Then Paul says that Jesus appeared to James (vs 7) his brother, and then to Paul (vs 8). The significance of these two in particular is that neither of them believed in the divinity and claims of Jesus until they encountered him resurrected, and once they did, their lives were never the same.

**James** - James was the half-brother of Jesus (shared Mary as mother, Joseph was James' biological dad, Joseph was Jesus' adopted dad). He was not a believer until encountering the resurrected Jesus and then he sold out. He eventually became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and was eventually stoned to death. Do you think that James, or anyone else, if they had fabricated & were perpetuating a lie, would be willing to die by being stoned to death?

**Paul** - Paul before his conversion was known as Saul. Saul was a zealous Jewish Pharisee. He was guilty of persecuting Christians so aggressively that his reputation was known among Christians to steer clear of him. However, he encountered the resurrected Jesus and his life was flipped upside down. He soon became the apostle to the Gentiles and responsible for the spreading of the gospel throughout the ancient world. He had no reason to swap teams. It only made him look foolish to turn toward the thing he once so aggressively attacked, yet only one thing can make sense of it. He saw Jesus Christ alive. The same is true for all the witnesses. They saw a dead man alive. The evidence that he was who he claimed to be was found in this event. Those he persecuted followed him.

Those who ran away at the threat of death soon ran to their deaths. All because they saw him alive!

V9-11 - This message was preached and the result was belief. The Corinthians, as well as other believers who have heard this message of the gospel, have believed still today.

## II. The Centrality of the Resurrection (vs 12-19)

V12-15 - Paul is aggressively going after them and reminding them of the gospel because of what we learn from these verses. Already the people are being led astray to believe there is no resurrection, meaning that Christ was not raised either. How quickly do we look for new ideas to entertain ourselves with?

V16-17 - says that if Christ is not raised from the dead then our faith is futile and that we are still in our sins. This is a huge statement. Many of us believe the resurrection is just some additional belief that we add to our "Jesus died on the cross for our sins." But Paul shows us here that the belief in the resurrection is central to our understanding of Christ's sacrificial death. If there is no resurrection of Christ, then there is not sufficient sacrifice for our sins. He had to be raised from the dead! Why?

If Christ remained dead, then we are without hope. We are to be most pitied. You see, the Bible teaches plainly that the wages of sin is death. Death is the result of sin. Because of sin we are sentenced to and under the curse of death. All of us will die physically because of sin, but some will die the second death that the Bible says will come to those who are cast out of the presence of God for their sin. This second death will be experienced by all who did not live by and put faith in Jesus Christ while they were alive. But let's get back to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus came to pay for our sins, he came to take upon himself the wrath of God for the judgment on sin, and because the wages of sin is death, what does that mean Jesus had to do? Die. Jesus had to die in order to truly be a substitute in the place of sinners for their sins. However, he did not come to just die for sin, but to conquer it, to exhaust its power over us. He came to defeat it.

So if Jesus is going to conquer over sin and exhaust its power, he must defeat its biggest curse over us which is what? **Death**. So it is absolutely necessary, in order to say that Jesus' death on the cross was successful at canceling our debt, Jesus had to be raised from the dead. Christ is no different than anyone else who dies, if he remains dead! There is no evidence that what he claimed to do for us can be proven if he remains dead.

V19 - Paul said that if our hope in Christ is only for this life, then we are people to be pitied. It is not enough for us to say, “well, following Jesus, even if it's all a lie, makes me a better person, and at least it is a better way to live.” No friends, if this is all a hoax and a scam, and Jesus Christ did not triumph over death by raising to life, then we are to be pitied. We are to be pitied. Our faith is worthless. Our hope is gone.

### **III. The Hope of Our Resurrection (vs 20-28)**

V20-23 - Christ is the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. He is the first of those who will be raised from the dead. In the same way that death came by one man (Adam), through one man (Christ) will come resurrection for those who are in him. This is our hope as believers. We believe that Jesus is not just some coping device that we have here on earth, but we are told from Scripture that Jesus' resurrection is our hope for our resurrection. We know that the grave is not the end for us, and we know that we are not going to some ghostly spiritual state after death, no, we will be raised from the dead, as Christ, physical in nature, but without defect, flaw, or sin. Our hope for this is the fact that Christ was raised from the dead and Scripture says that the day is coming when we too will be raised.

V24-28 - Paul then says when the end comes, Jesus will deliver over to God the Father the kingdom after destroying every rule and authority and power. That means every rule, authority, and power that wars against God's kingdom. Christ is ruling and reigning right now over all the world. As resurrected King and Savior he is the rightful ruler of this world. He is not some theoretical God, no, he is the resurrected Savior who ascended back to heaven (Acts 1) where he sits now ruling and reigning and is preparing to return. It is at this return that he will put all enemies under his feet and the last enemy - death. When all things have been subjected, the Son himself will also be subjected to him (the Father) who put all things in subjection under him (Christ). The purpose in this is that then God will be all in all, He will be supreme, He will be glorious and radiant above all things.

This is our hope. We may suffer persecution and hardships while on earth. Health, wealth, and prosperity preaching ignores major biblical teaching concerning the very real difficulties of life faced, even as a Christian. But our hope is beyond having “the good life” now, we have a hope that surpasses the temporal things of earth. We have the hope that the grave will not hold us down.

My family and friends gathered around the casket of my son, Kaleb, and read this text before burying him. This Scripture fuels our hope in the darkest and hardest of days. We know that the grave is ultimately defeated because Jesus is alive. We know that he is the first-fruits from the dead. Christ has overcome. Christ has won the victory. Jesus is alive! This is a very real, practical belief of the Christian. We don't dust it off once per year and give it some attention. This is the foundation of the believer's life and faith.

We celebrate the glory of our risen Savior today. King Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He took on flesh so that he could bear the wrath of sin in our place. Those who believe by repenting and placing their faith in him are redeemed and forgiven of their sin. But our hope is rooted and grounded in the reality of the resurrection of Christ. The fact that he arose gives us our hope that he has defeated Satan, sin, and death, and that we too one day will be raised again, never to perish, never to stumble, never to taste death again. In this incorruptible state, we will be with God forever, in His presence, no greater joy.

We don't get the luxury of seeing him first before believing. The apostles saw him. Paul saw him. James saw him. 500 eye-witnesses saw him. We don't get to see him first. I love what Jesus says to Thomas about this. Thomas made a fuss about not believing Jesus was alive unless he saw him and put his fingers in his wounds. Jesus shows up and reveals himself to Thomas. Thomas' response is recorded.

**John 20:28-29 (ESV) - 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

Jesus refers to us in these words. Blessed are those who believe and haven't seen. We believe in the eye-witness testimony of those who did. Maybe some of you would believe it for the first time today. Call on him. Confess you need him. Believe that his death pays for your sins, and his resurrection is the evidence God receives it. Turn from your life of living for yourself and under your authority, and bow your knee before the Lord today.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How would you answer the question, "If we discovered definitively that Jesus had not been raised from the dead, how would it change your faith?"
2. What is the central point of the Gospel?
3. What are the implications for Christians if Christ was not raised from the dead?

4. Do you believe the apostles would have died for a lie? Is there a lie that you would be willing to die for?
5. Discuss the “if, then” statements in verses 12-18.
6. What does it mean that Christ is the first fruit?
7. What “end” is Paul referencing in verse 24?
8. How does the resurrection of Christ give you hope when you’re going through trials and suffering?