

Essential Faith & Resurrection results Call Luke 24. I Corinthians 15.1-15 I Cor 15.12-20, 56-58

Just A month before I began seminary I was the Best Man at a friend's wedding. At the reception, a retirement age woman asked me what I planned to do with my life. When I told her I was going to be a pastor, I expected her to respond: "How nice!" as I had heard so many times before. Instead, she replied: "Oh what a waste of time!" Surprised, I asked, "What did you say???" Again, she announced, "What a waste of time being a pastor would be!" I was stunned! I am rarely speechless, but was at that moment. However, as I reflected on her words, I realized Paul came to the same conclusion in our passage! Preaching is useless and even misrepresents God... IF, If Jesus remained dead...

Paul clearly says here, if Christ has not been raised from the dead, there would be no Christian faith and no hope of forgiveness of sin! Without the resurrection there would be no church, no confidence in our life beyond death. If our hope is limited to this life only, Christians are most to be pitied, says Paul..!

Then in verse 20 Paul insists, "**IN FACT CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!**" Jesus is the first sign and guarantee that all believers will enjoy eternal life! In this chapter the Apostle reveals what is **absolutely essential** to our Christian life and faith: Jesus Christ died for our sins and is resurrected- alive today! Paul explains that beyond the first disciples who met the risen Lord, there were also over 500 witnesses to the resurrection and some were still alive decades ^{later} ~~later~~ to confirm the fact. Paul also offers himself as a witness. Now Paul did not see Jesus alive on that day of resurrection like the women, Peter and other early disciples.

Remember Paul was an enemy of the early church persecuting Christians! Then the living Lord appeared to Paul in a vision on the road to Damascus, asking, "Why are you persecuting me? Paul was changed from legalism to grace, from hatred to all embracing compassion. TODAY, our life changing trust in our living Lord is also a witness to the resurrection of Jesus!

Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth because some were beginning to doubt what they first believed. They expected Jesus to return within their lifetime but decades had passed and loved ones had died. Deaths and tragedies also can shake our faith today. In addition, Paul mentions false teachers within the early church just as in our day watered down versions of the gospel can harm faith. Therefore, Paul pens this Resurrection chapter to encourage confidence in the essentials of our faith- **both** full forgiveness and life beyond death in Jesus our Lord. There are many core truths in the gospel, yet Jesus' death and resurrection are absolute essentials, the sure foundation of our Christian faith! The cross and resurrection make all the difference in the world, and all the difference in how we live faithfully!

A young girl in Reston, VA wrote this in Sunday School: "BECAUSE JESUS IS ALIVE- I know God loves me and is beside me!" HOW WOULD YOU finish the sentence, because Jesus is alive???

Because Jesus is alive, I will see my parents and brother again! Loved ones who have died in Christ are not gone!

Resurrection means we need not be terrified of dying! Sin, death, evil and injustice will be overcome by God! Therefore we can be bravely faithful, knowing God's way will prevail...

Because Jesus is alive, we know we are forgiven fully and freely. Jesus was not a martyr but is our Redeemer!

Resurrection means **this congregation & every Christian church** are full of God's hope & purpose! **Since the Lord is risen**, Paul was devoted to living & sharing God's compassion whatever the cost and so should we be fully devoted to live, love and serve sacrificially! Paul ends the resurrection chapter calling us to be boldly faithful, because of Jesus' resurrection means nothing done in love and faithfulness is ever in vain! *xx (let me repeat that gospel truth...)*

And never forget Jesus' Resurrection proves that **God's promises are forever!** When I was 10 years old I was in an accident and lost one of my front teeth. My dentist who was old put a temporary crown over my eye tooth and restored my smile. As I left the office he said with a mighty laugh, "**Keith, I'll give you a lifetime guarantee on that tooth!**" I did not get his joke at the time and the crown lasted many years, much longer than a temporary crown should ever last. **Of course the joke was**, I was very young and my dentist was very old. Soooo, by the time I would need a replacement, my dentist would be either long retired or dead.... Our human promises to each other **are important**. However, any human promise is good only as long as we live!!! On the other hand, **GOD'S PROMISES ARE ETERNAL!!!**

Let me leave you with three resurrection symbols, reminding us of the joyous Resurrection!

Two of these symbols are in chapter 15: Jesus' resurrection is called "the first fruits" and Paul refers to "the final trumpet" blowing. **First fruits means** Jesus is the first to conquer death and his resurrection is the guarantee of our promised life beyond death! First fruits is a harvest image. Jewish farmers offered God the first and finest of their harvest with the confidence of more harvest to come. So Jesus' resurrection is the victory assuring our own life beyond death. That reminds me of Revelation calling Jesus the "**bright morning star!**" When we see in predawn darkness that bright morning star- the planet Venus- we know with certainty that dawn and the new day is coming! Jesus means while life is sometimes dark- we can know the light of a new, bright day is coming! I love that Biblical image and promise!

In addition, **the trumpet blast is a sign of victory!** Sin, death and evil are strong but Jesus' resurrection proclaims that sin and death **will be finally defeated!** Easter proclaims God's justice and love will surely triumph. The Easter Lilly is in the shape of a trumpet. And I fondly remember Bob Russow playing his trumpet at every Easter worship in a church I served!

The 3rd symbol is the butterfly! This wonder of nature became a Christian symbol of eternal life as a caterpillar dies in a tomb like cocoon, before born to new life as a stunningly beautiful, butterfly! I brought Joni Eareckson Tada's painting of this resurrection symbol. Her strong faith led to a long, full life of love, witness and service despite being paralyzed as a teenager!

You can google her life story and *her* butterfly resurrection painting is on the communion table. *to view*

after worship season
On this Easter, remember! Paul insists Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection victory are **foundations of our faith!** How we live and how we face death arise from God's promise of sharing Jesus' victory. The resurrection is **so central to faith** that early Christians changed the Sabbath day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Saturday Sabbath honors God's creation while our Sunday Sabbath celebrates Jesus' resurrection. So, every Sunday we worship is indeed **the Day of Resurrection!** *WILL YOU JOIN ME IN READING THE SCRIPTURES* **OFFERING** *CONFESSION at the*

LET US JOYFULLY & GRATEFULLY GIVE GOD OUR THINGS & OFFERINGS — Remembering God has given us life in hope in and eternal life in Jesus!