

Live Like the Resurrection is Real
1 Cor 15:12-19

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this morning has been a celebration thus far – in true Easter Sunday style.

We have read about the triumphant resurrection to life- Jesus coming back from the dead, the empty grave, we've proclaimed "Jesus is alive! He is risen! He is risen indeed!"

We've pulled out the classic Easter songs and sung them enthusiastically – we even have Easter Lilies incorporated into our set design this morning to give it some additional Easter flair! And if we had just a little bit more time... I'm sure we could have figured out a way to incorporate Hot Cross buns into the celebration this morning.

But what exactly are we putting all this energy into celebrating this morning?

Now I realize this may seem like a dumb question – its Easter Sunday... duh! we're celebrating the resurrection!

But let's keep pressing the question – what exactly are we celebrating?

Because Easter comes around every year and we've been doing this Easter thing for as long as any of us can remember... So, its easy for something like Easter Sunday to become routine. Not in the sense that it becomes boring – no... we always make sure things are pumped up for Easter – that's what Easter Sunday is all about right?? It's like the Superbowl of Christianity.

But, what is it that are we celebrating?

Are we celebrating a happy ending to a sad story - like so many of the movies we watch? Where it looks like the hero has perished... we thought they had died - but then they came back to life. So, just when we thought Jesus was dead and it was all over... he's come back alive! and that's so great! because we really liked Jesus, he was such an awesome guy, we're so glad he's back! Is that what we are celebrating?

Or maybe we are celebrating life over death, positivity over negativity, how good things can come out of bad situations?

The resurrection on Easter Sunday morning is a specific example of a general principle that we can see working in our lives... its so appropriate then that we celebrate it as the death of the winter season begins to give way to the new life that comes with the spring. Good always wins over evil in the end – right? Is that what we're celebrating?

Or maybe we are celebrating the possibilities of what God can do for us. Easter Sunday is a demonstration of how God can do the impossible. Nothing – not even death, can contain His power and hold Him back and the resurrection should inspire us to believe that God is going to do impossible things in our lives as well. Especially if we are facing difficult circumstances! So, we are celebrating the motivation to believe and have faith in a mighty miracle working God.

Is that what we're celebrating?

Or maybe now that I've pressed the question a bit more for us... now we're not really sure what we're celebrating?

So let's take the opportunity this morning to look more closely at the resurrection and exactly what it means and what we are celebrating about it on Easter Sunday.

You see brothers and sisters, while most Christians have a general awareness that the resurrection was a really important part of God's plan to save us, since we are a very pragmatic bunch when it comes to our faith – we struggle with the application of the resurrection for our daily lives and how we ought to live like the resurrection is real.

Now this wouldn't be big issue if the resurrection wasn't so central to our salvation – if it was more like Jesus' baptism or His ascension. Then we would just leave it off to the side and not really worry about it and how its supposed to make a difference for us.

But instinctively we know that the resurrection is really important.

And that certainly comes through in what Paul says in the scripture passage that we read this morning from 1 Cor 15. Vs 17 implies that if Jesus did not rise from the dead then our faith – is futile... and we are still in our sins, and anyone who has died as a believer is lost because they have died in their sins, and will stand before God – unforgiven.

And 1 Peter 1:3 says that God *“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead...”*

And later in 3:21 as Peter is teaching about being Baptised into Christ he says *“It saves you by the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ...”*

So – because of scripture verses like these, we come away with the sense that Jesus’ resurrection is really important to our salvation. And being the pragmatists that we are – if

something is really important that means it must somehow be applied to our daily lives and make a difference in them...

And so, the different reasons that I mentioned about “what we are celebrating on Easter Sunday this morning” are three ways that we try to live like the resurrection is real, only they are not very good ways to live this out because they boil down to either mushy sentimentality or blatant self-interest.

But since God is always so gracious to meet us where we are at – let’s consider a couple of biblically correct ways we can live like the resurrection is real that will satisfy our pragmatic tendencies.

First, what is implied in 1 Cor 15:17-18 with respect to the resurrection and its connection to our sins can be more fully expressed by stating that Christ’s resurrection is the proof that God considered His death sufficient to pay for all our sins.

If there was any outstanding balance that was still due because Christ was not able to pay it in full with his life, then

His life would have been forfeit and God would not have raised Him from the dead – this is why Paul says that those who have died believing in Christ would also be lost.

So, we can apply this to our daily lives and live it out by using it to counter our doubts that we are truly forgiven of ALL our sin – past, present, and future and that when we struggle with our besetting sins of anger, lust, greed, envy, gluttony, sloth, and pride... repeatedly... for the umpteenth time...

We can hold on to the reality of the resurrection that we have celebrated to assure ourselves there is no amount of self-loathing, demonstrations of our repentance, and or promising to do better that will convince God He should forgive us – because it's already been done!

We may rightly feel disappointed in ourselves for our failure – but it's already been forgiven in Christ and we must learn to live by the grace that is given to us when we realize how much we don't deserve it. That is what grace is, and the

resurrection is proof of it in our daily life. Do you see how that works?

Secondly, the Resurrection can help us forgive others and get past injustice. Now you might not think we need that these days, after all, our society is all about tolerance and not judging others right – who has a problem with forgiving others or injustice??

Well, the irony that we live with these days... is that we're all about tolerance and not judging others *until* someone commits a terrible injustice, then we are all about making sure the perpetrator pays for their crime and gets cancelled.

Whether the crime is a subjective perceived injustice – like mis-gendering someone or refusing to acknowledge how they self-identify, or an actual injustice like theft, assault, injury, fraud, murder, genocide, and so on... the irony of our daily lives these days is that we say we're tolerant but we are truly hung up on the notion of justice and we can't get past it to offer forgiveness or bring about reconciliation.

But if the resurrection proves that Christ's death was sufficient to pay for our sins then we have to admit that whatever we believe someone deserves for the injustice they perpetrated against us or others – has already been suffered -IN FULL – by Christ.

That special place in hell that reserved for oppressors, racists, and misogynists was already occupied by Jesus on their behalf.

The eternal suffering that a rapist, a child molester, or a murder or terrorist rightly deserves – has already been endured by Jesus for them.

Whatever we think someone justly deserves for how they have done us wrong – has been done to Jesus...

And the resurrection is proof of that. Justice has been done; someone has paid the penalty – or the resurrection wouldn't have occurred because vengeance belongs to God- and He must be satisfied that the crimes have received the punishments that fit them.

Now justice is a big topic for the Christian faith, which has implications for what it to have a justice and legal system and how we work out issues of faith and crime and punishment in society and so on – this is a much bigger topic than what we are focusing on this morning.

But pragmatically speaking – for what most of us deal with in our day to day lives, the resurrection means we have no right to withhold forgiveness until someone has paid for what they've done to us...

And it means that we must consider no one to be irredeemable or undeserving or cancelled out of hearing the good news of forgiveness in Jesus as a consequence for what they have done or who they are – and regardless of what the rest of society thinks about them.

Pragmatically speaking - the resurrection can keep justice from getting in the way of our ability showing agape Love – self sacrificing love – to those who are different from us, who

are our enemies and keep us praying for those who persecute us.

How else would the Apostle Paul have been changed over from Saul and accepted into the early Church – by relatives of those whom he had persecuted and killed - were it not for this pragmatic truth of the resurrection?

So, living like the resurrection is real means that in our daily lives, we Christians can be truly tolerant and loving and not condemn anyone as undeserving of the gospel – that is in part what we are celebrating this morning...

But what if our pragmatism is also part of the problem with how we try to approach and understand the resurrection? What if Jesus' resurrection is more about our future than our present?

The Heidelberg catechism teaches us about this aspect of the resurrection in Question and Answer 45 when it states

*“Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of **our** glorious resurrection.”* Our resurrection...

We don't often focus on that do we. Even though when we recite the Apostle's Creed we say I believe in... the resurrection of the dead.

We're so pragmatic that we don't pay much attention to what happens to us after death... well that's not entirely true is it. We've gotten saved because we want to ensure that when our body dies our soul will go to heaven instead of hell and we can have eternal life!

But now that we've got the afterlife sorted out, we need to get on with this life and how faith in Jesus Christ makes a difference in the here and now – so we can be living our... what do they say these days?? “Living our best life ever”

Except what does Paul say to us in 1 Cor 15:19?? *“If only for **this life** we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”*

In other words, if our we think that the most important aspects of the Christian faith have to do with what we pragamtically experience in this life... If we have lost sight to the life that is still to come and what it entails...

If what we are all about is what Jesus can do for us in this life as opposed to what Jesus is doing to us to prepare us as His bride for the next life – then yes we are to be pitied, because we are deluded into acting like this life is all there really is – that the world in its present form is most important and we are investing ALL that we have in something that we don't realize is coming up for a major and complete overhaul.

And if you find yourself thinking *“well what's the big deal about “our resurrection” anyways – as long as we go to heaven, right?”*

Then we're definitely in danger of being pitied and we have lost the perspective of the Christian faith. So – is this the case for us? Brothers and sisters, I think our pragmatism puts us in danger of it.

And our pragmatic approach to the resurrection causes us to be included among those whom Paul is rebuking in vs. 12-17 for saying there is no resurrection of the dead.

Now we might not be speaking that exact phrase - but we all know that our pragmatic actions speak louder than words don't they, and that means we are not living like OUR resurrection is real.

And by virtue of the argument that Paul is making in these verses - living like OUR resurrection is not real is tantamount to living like Christ's resurrection is not real... and as he says it makes our preaching useless as well as our faith and it makes us out to be false witnesses about God.

Let me just read it again for us *“¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say (or live like) there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then*

found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

Now Paul knows that it is not our intention to say that Christ has not been raised from the dead, or to make our preaching and our faith useless, or to be false witnesses about God – and the easy solution to this whole situation is to back off our pragmatism and be intentional about celebrating OUR resurrection as we celebrate Christ’s resurrection this morning.

So – that means deliberately NOT asking the question *“what difference does this resurrection make in my day-to-day life?”* but instead asking *“what can I be expecting in the life to come – what will I be resurrected to?”*

Paul gives us a brief description of this just a few verses later – he says *“⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is*

sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

Brothers and sisters, we will be resurrected physically – not metaphorically, not just spiritually – but bodily. When Paul says that we are raised to be “spiritual” bodies this does not mean immaterial, non-corporeal spirits – it means spirit filled bodies. We will be so filled with the Holy Spirit that we are completely and finally transformed.

And our resurrected bodies will no longer be subject to aging, deterioration or decay, or sickness and disease. Our minds will be sharp, our faculties clear, we will be full of vitality and strength and energy! And we will be glorious – literally!

At our resurrection God will give us our own glory, just as He has His uncreated and eternal glory as God Almighty – so we will have our own glory that reflects how He has resurrected us.

We get a sneak peak of this when God passed by Moses and let Him witness the backside of His glory – Moses was radiant and gave off that radiance himself for a while afterwards.

We see it as well when Jesus began to glow with His divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

And it is fitting that we have this glory given to us because we will no longer be afflicted by Sin in any way shape or form, we will be pure in heart and mind and deed, made fit for the task we will be given of reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12) and even judging the angels (1 Cor 6:3).

And our resurrected bodies do not live up in heaven – rather we dwell in the New Creation, symbolized by the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven to earth. And our purpose will be to enjoy God face to face – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to take care of the New Creation...

Remember Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven that it will be like the Master saying to his servant *"Well done,*

good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

This is what we are resurrected to brothers and sisters – so when we are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus on Easter we are celebrating our own eventual resurrection.

This is why Paul says in vs. 20 *"Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits (the prototype or first model) of those who have fallen asleep."*

And lest we get the wrong impression that we're just switching our self-interested focus from living our best life now to getting our best life in the future – this is not a product of our own self-interest, it is what God had planned and intended for us all along.

Jesus says in Matthew 25:34 *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."*

So, brothers and sisters, put aside your pragmatism – fix your focus and emphasis on our resurrection for a while and you might just find that you are not as concerned or worried or anxious about the day-to-day things that we deal with...

You might just find that you really start to resonate when Paul proclaims in Romans 8:18 *“that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us!”*

And how God will use any and all circumstances that He allows to come into our lives – weaving them together in an incredibly complex and astonishing way to bring us to the day when we will be resurrected.

That amazing future will start to make its way back into our present, and we will start to notice more and more indications that point to its fulfillment.

So, what are we celebrating this morning brothers and sisters? Quite simply – we are celebrating the accomplishment and the

first example what God intends to do to each of us demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

Our resurrection is real brothers and sister let us live like it is – because Christ has risen. So – will – we! Amen.