

Easter 2023 – “The Resurrected King”

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

We have been celebrating and confessing our faith all morning long...certainly in this last song – THIS is what it’s all about! *All Hail King Jesus! He is Lord!*

Why? Because he has risen from the dead. THIS is the central message of Christianity. THIS is it! If you want to know what our faith is all about. If you want to know everything else revolves around filters through, it is what we are celebrating and confessing today: The resurrection of Jesus!

Jaroslav Pelikan was a professor at Yale and Christian historian. He wrote, echoing the Apostle Paul– “**If Christ is not raised, nothing matters; if Christ is raised, nothing else matters.**”

And this is what I want us to unpack today. I want us to talk about why the resurrection is the most important event NOT just in the Bible, but in all of history, AND why does it even matter in the first place.

The apostle Paul, who wrote 1/3rd of the New Testament had a lot to say about a lot of subjects. In one of his letters, he reveals that in everything he had written about and preached, there was a message that was preeminent. It was what he referred to as of “first importance”.

1 Cor. 15:3-5 – “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

This message: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is summarized in one word throughout the Bible – we call it the “gospel”. It means “good news”!

And Paul says this “good news” is the most important news that has ever been delivered. Out of everything he has ever said...everything he has ever written – THIS gospel...this good news message that Jesus died, was buried, and was raised to life three days later was MOST important.

Now, that’s saying something. You and I...we have all got to deliver or receive “good news” at times. It may be:

- About a promotion and raise that we received at work, and we got to come home and tell our spouse...
- It was a pregnancy or birth announcement...these days a big deal is the gender reveal parties – shares the good news of whether the baby will be a boy or a girl...
- Or maybe it’s that a health crisis that has been circumvented...

Illus. Children’s workers – This week, one of our 5th grade life group leaders, Sonya Renteria had sent a message previously to us here at the church that said some tests she had done came back, and the news wasn’t good at all! It was advanced cancer tumors and the doctors were saying they aren’t too sure that surgery or chemo will help. They are trying to find a solution, the only way I know to fight it is with prayer. She went back to MD Anderson this week and received this news – “ALL CLEAR of all cancer. The surgeon said it was like all the tumors have melted away!” That’s good news!

Of all the good news we’ve ever received though or all the good news we’ve gotten to share with someone, Paul says the BEST good news...the MOST important good news is the message of the gospel.

Now, let’s look at why it’s so good...why it’s so important. First, Paul writes in **1 Cor. 15:3b** – “**Christ died for our sins...**”

We can’t talk about a resurrection without first talking about a death...one goes before the other. And before we celebrate Easter, we mourn on Good Friday. Paul says here that it is “good news” that Christ died for our sins.

See, sin is THE problem. Our sin is what separates us from God. He is holy and we are not...we are born every single person in the room and watching online, with a sin nature. We are sinners.

Rom. 3:23 – “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

And our sin has consequences. It brings death. **Rom. 6:23** – “**For the wages of sin is death...**”

Now, I hate death! Like all of you, I’ve seen up close what death does!

- the devastation it brings...
- the sense of loss...
- the heartache...
- the tears....

There is NOTHING pretty about death. And I know what some of you are thinking – “Then why are you talking about! Move on...Come on, Jarrett, this is Easter! Let’s talk bunnies and easter eggs...springtime and flowers! Did you see how cute I dressed my kids this morning! Get off this subject of death!”

I understand that...but death is a reality we can’t ignore! We can’t just glance over it and act as if it doesn’t exist or won’t someday come knocking on our door!

Illus. Three buddies story – I heard about three friends who were discussing death and one of them asked the group, “What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?” The first

one said, "I hope they say, "He was a great humanitarian, and he really cared about the community in which he lived."

The second man replied, "I hope at my funeral they will say, he was a great husband and father and a strong example for many to follow." The third man looked at them and said, "I hope at my funeral they will see me and say, 'Look, he's moving!'"

Listen: This is the thought of a lot of people. Let's just ignore death and not talk about it...let's distance ourselves from it, but we can't do this. Physical death is a reality for all of us and it's a result of sin.

Heb. 9:27 – "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment..."

Jesus in dying FOR our sins, takes on our judgment. And while we will all die physically – that will never change. Because of Jesus dying FOR our sins we don't have to die and experience a spiritual death where we are forever separated from God.

The death of Jesus is good news because his death made atonement for our sins.

Heb. 9:22b – "...for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

Jesus blood being poured out on the cross – Jesus dying was the sacrifice God required for the payment of sin and it provided a way for us to be restored to a right relationship with God.

That's why this good news is the most important news. You can't get to God any other way than Jesus dying FOR our sin.

- No amount of good deeds can restore you to a right relationship with God.
- No amount of service hours...church attendance...none of that forgives sin or removes the brokenness that comes because of it.

Only the death of Jesus – dying FOR our sins can give us a clean slate before a holy God! Secondly, though look at this next phrase Paul includes. It's part of the good news...the MOST important news as well:

1 Cor. 15:4a – "that he was buried..."

Interesting that Paul would include that little phrase. Can I let you in on a little secret? Did you know (this is going to blow your mind) that we only bury dead people?

It's true! Go to any funeral home and tell them you want to be buried. A prerequisite is you must be dead! Klein funeral home will NOT bury you alive – they won't!

Paul is wanting his ensure his audience knows Jesus really did die on the cross...he didn't pass out...he didn't as some suggest recover in the depths of the cold grave. That's just silly. His disciples didn't break into the tomb and steal his body.

No. All four gospels attest to his death AND his burial – each of them mention he was buried in a tomb. It was sealed with a large stone.

Illus. Israel trips – We always make our way to the site of the Garden Tomb (**SHOW B-ROLL**). Now, there is no way of knowing if this is the exact site of where Jesus was buried, but the tomb would have been similar, and it is in close proximity to a Garden that due to excavations has been discovered there.

John's gospel tells us in **John 19:38-42** – **“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.”**

Jesus being buried affirms he really died. And isn't it true - whether it's sealing a tomb with a heavy rock or closing a casket and lowering it into the ground, when someone is buried there is a sense of finality – EXCEPT...EXCEPT in the case of Jesus!

Paul puts no space...doesn't pause for an instance to create a more dramatic effect. He just puts it as plainly as can be – it is just another fact he gives concerning the good news.

1 Cor. 15:3-4 – **“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, (comma) that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...”**

The central fact of Christianity hinges on this right here - the bodily resurrection of Jesus. If it happened, it changes everything. If it didn't then we are wasting time here today.

In fact, Paul in: **1 Cor. 15:17-19** – **“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”**

Now, we live in a “prove it to me” world. Our justice system is designed...it's set up to show proof. This is how a case is made...evidence has to be put forward. We are all the time taking out our phone and snapping shots and video of places we have been and things we have done. Why?

Because we want to show people! We don't want to just tell them, we want to show them...prove to them what we are saying is true!

Paul gives a few "proofs of the resurrection" in this chapter. He doesn't just want you to take his word, he offers up some evidence.

First is: **The Testimony of Scripture**

Did you notice that twice he mentions in (v. 3-4) that the death, burial and resurrection was "in accordance with the scripture". He's pointing out that this "good news" was prophesied over and over again.

The entire Old Testament is FULL of pictures, symbolization and prophecies that point to Jesus – Over 300 specific prophecies fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Jesus himself foretold of his death and resurrection.

Luke 18:31-33 – “And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”

The testimony of scripture is proof of the resurrection. The "good news" we are looking at today was foretold hundreds and in some cases, thousands of years before it ever happened - and then it actually happened the exact way that it was foretold.

A second proof is: **The Testimony of Eyewitnesses**

1 Cor. 15:5-8 – “and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the early 50's...that's within 25 years of the death of Jesus. And Paul says, "look if you don't believe me, he appeared to a bunch of other people who are still alive – go ask them!"

There is a strong eyewitness account of the resurrected Jesus that adds to the proof of the resurrection.

2 Peter 1:16 – “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

Then you have: **The Testimony of Changed Lives**

I won't stay here long, but Paul who is writing this letter to the Corinthians was radically changed when he encountered Christ. He went from persecuting the church to planting churches.

Each of the disciples save John were eventually martyred for their belief in Christ – no way do they willingly die for a known lie.

These early followers mostly Jewish believers had worshiped and made sacrifices on Saturday...that was their Sabbath. And now, after the resurrection they shift on something they had been doing forever and begin worshipping on the first day of the week – the Lord's day...the day he was RAISED from the dead!

What a proof of the resurrection!

N.T. Wright – “If it was only an empty tomb and there had been no sightings, people would have believed the body was stolen. If there were only eyewitnesses who claimed to see Jesus, but the tomb still had a body in it, then people would have believed the eyewitnesses were hallucinating. But only if all these were true – the empty tomb (as foretold by prophetic scripture), eyewitness accounts and changed lives –could Christianity ever have begun. Thus the resurrection must have been true.”

The good news...the most important news is Jesus died FOR our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day! Does any of this matter?

Tim Keller in his book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* wrote: **“If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.”**

Keller's right. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said. You have to accept these words:

John 14:6 – “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 11:25-26 – “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

See, this good news...the most important news that has ever been delivered demands a response!

Illus. Riley birth (tell story) – It was such good news, I didn't know what to do it?! So, I just passed out!

The good news of Jesus demands a response. It may not be passing out, but it demands a response FOR SURE. And as I've observed over the years there is typically only two responses. One is a hardened response and the other is a humbled response.

It's been said that the "same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay." How will you respond? Hardened or Humbled?

1. Hardened response

The idea here being, "I hear what you are saying, Jarrett but if believing in Jesus means changing how I'm living, I'm not ready for that. I want to keep doing my own thing and going my own way."

It's a hardened response...it's a refusal to believe all this resurrection stuff. If that's you, I want you to know the Bible says there is something a bit deeper going on.

2 Cor. 4:4 – "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel."

In your case, this good news doesn't move you because Satan has blinded you and you're only hope is for God to remove the blindfold...and maybe from today's message he is doing just that.

My encouragement is not to stay hard-headed because a hard head can lead to a hard heart. And a hard heart is like dead, calloused skin. It's tough and nothing can break through. It's the hard heart that says, "NO!" to the Holy Spirit when he is speaking to you.

Heb. 3:7a – "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..."

The sinful unbelieving heart will lead you to fall away from God forever. A hardened, indifferent response to God is a dangerous response to God and there are so many scriptures I could give you warn against this.

There's a second response I've seen though...when the good news is shared...I've seen it! It's how I pray you respond today.

2. Humbled response

Someone hears the gospel message...this good news that Jesus died FOR their sins...that he was buried and raised on the third day and that message – it's the power of God!

And it's been shared today and even now it's like a light bulb is going off in your mind and heart...the scales are falling off your eyes. Your heart softens...and this message of the love of God in Christ changes you.

What's taking place is a divine miracle – the Bible calls it being born again.

And so, I ask you in closing today, what is your response to the MOST important news that's ever been shared...it's good news...and it's good news for you!

Would you bow your heads with me. If you want to respond in a humbled way to Jesus and receive him into your life so that your sins can be forgiven and you can be restored to a right relationship with God:

- A humbled response has no problem admitting sin.
- A humbled response has no issue with crying out to God for mercy and asking him to help you believe.
- A humbled response is more than willing to confess Jesus as Lord of life because they know life without Jesus isn't working any way.

If this is you and you want to respond in a humbled way to the good news that you've heard today – that Jesus died, was buried and was raised on the third day, I'm going to ask you to look right here at me.

I'm going to put a prayer on the screen that I want you to pray from your heart:

Prayer: "Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. Forgive me of my sin. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you died on the cross for my sins. I believe you were buried and raised to life. I ask you to come into my heart and live in me. I trust you with and for my salvation. Thank you for saving me and help me to live for you every day. Amen."

Now, if you prayed that prayer with me, it's the greatest decision you will ever make...you made the right choice!

And now I'm going to ask you to make another decision...and that is to make your receiving of Jesus public and in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to stand.

We do this all the time around here and here's what is going to happen. Our church wants to celebrate your decision. The Bible pictures heaven as a big party...even saying when one comes to know Jesus all of heaven rejoices! A party is being thrown!

And today because new life is taking place...there is so much joy...so much excitement...we're joining in on that heavenly a party!

And so, for those of you who prayed with me that prayer...you repeated in your heart and meant it, we want to celebrate...like it's your birthday party and in a very real way, it is! It's your spiritual birthday.

And so here is what I'm going to ask you to do: I'm going to pray and then I'm going to ask you to stand...and by standing you are saying, I prayed with you, Jarrett and gave my life to Jesus.

PRAY.

So here we go...on the count of three. No waiting...no looking around...by faith you have asked Jesus for life and by faith you are going to stand and let us celebrate with you. Ready?
1...2...3...Stand!

Church stand with them...be seated...explain registration card and balloon towers.

BECAUSE HE LIVES.

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