

David W. Long, Pastor
Reformed Presbyterian Church
Lord's Day Morning
April 8, 2007

“The Good News of the Resurrection” I Corinthians 15:1-11

Introduction

What's the most important thing in your life? There may be a lot of different answers to that question present here today. Some of you might say it's your family – maybe your relationship with your wife or your children. And I'd be hard pressed to tell you that you've made a bad choice there. Some of you may say the most important thing in your life is your friends. It might be your career, or your education or some hobby or sport you enjoy. The truth is we all value various things differently, but we all do hold certain aspects of our life as more precious than others. How you determine what is most important to you will shape the decisions and choices you make in life. And interestingly enough, the truth is found in the choices we make, not in the proclamations we make.

For instance, a father who claims that his children are the most important thing in his life, but who never has time to spend with them, finds that his claims are suspect. A husband who pledges to put his wife first in his affections, but devotes more time to his golf game than his marriage, finds trouble at home. An athlete who brags of his dedication to the game, but who skips practices is not telling the truth.

Maybe a better question to ask yourself today is this: What should be the most important thing in your life? How should you determine value - and

what affect should your choices have on the rest of your life?

The Bible has something to say about what is important – indeed, what is of most importance. We might consider it a risky thing in a day and age where relativism reigns, to declare for all men, what should be most important in their life. But that is exactly what the Bible does. As we will see this morning, the Bible states that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and all the events of His life, should be more important to you than anything else.

But I want to suggest to you today, that that truth, rather than diminishing the value of the thing that you personally find important, will actually enhance it. If Jesus Christ and the good news of His life and death and resurrection will take first place in your life, you will find new vision, perspective and power to live your life to its fullest.

[I Corinthians 15:1-11]

This is Easter. It's a day when people around the world are thinking about Jesus' resurrection. The problem, of course, is not that people are thinking about it today, but that too many only think about it today. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the good news that it proclaims is the focal point of our worship every Sunday and is to impact every area and discipline of our life. This morning we are going to consider two things:

- The Priority of the Resurrection
- The Power of the Resurrection

I. The Priority of the Resurrection

If you ever want an easy way to summarize Christianity – if you want a way to remember the central truth of the Bible, then simply remember the

3rd verse. The Apostle Paul gives us the basics of the gospel: Jesus died for sins. Jesus was buried in a tomb. Jesus was bodily raised back to life on the third day. All of this was predicted and planned by God from the beginning of time.

Now the question is *why*. *How is that a priority for my life?* The answer to that question is found inside of you. The answer to why that truth should be more important to you than anything else is found in your nature. How do you view yourself?

Regardless of how you may *feel* about yourself, God tells us the truth about ourselves. God says that apart from the work Jesus Christ did on the cross, you are a person in trouble. There are significant issues you need to think about regarding your past, your present and your future.

Past – You came into the world with a sinful nature. You were not born neutral. You were not born in innocence. The Bible teaches that we come into the world with a fallen and a corrupt nature. Romans 3:9-12 says, *both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.*

Present – The truth is we all sin. In spite of your good intentions, you are laboring under the guilt of your own sin. Every day you say things, think things, do things that don't please God. Apart from Christ, we are motivated by our own desires and pleasures and not the glory of God. Ephesians 2 tells us that we *walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our*

flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Future – If that news isn't sobering enough, our future prospects are no better. Without the resurrection of Christ as the most important thing in your life, you face a future accounting before God that can only end in your judgment and suffering. Listen to the somber warning from II Thessalonians 1. *The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*

Now it's because of our problems, past, present and future, that we need to see the priority of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are three things Jesus did opened the door for our change and our deliverance. That's what this text is about.

1. He died for sin. At the cross Jesus willing took upon Himself our problems – past, present and future. He took upon Himself the sin of His people. He became a substitute. Instead of a sinner having to answer for His sins, Jesus took the sins of others upon Himself.

2. He was buried. In other words, His death was real. His suffering and punishment was not fake. The reality of what you deserve – the punishment for sins, was meted out upon Christ. Christians have been saved because the required penalty for their sins has already been paid. God's justice was satisfied by Jesus.

3. He rose from the dead. How can we be sure the gospel is true? The answer is the good news of the gospel was sealed by the resurrection. No one has ever permanently overcome death before. But Jesus Christ did.

So that is a brief summary of what Paul calls the gospel. But that brings us back to our original question about our own lives. What difference should it make to us? To help answer that question, let's consider:

II. The Power of the Resurrection.

We have in our text today 6 examples of people or groups of people who came face to face with the resurrected Christ. One of the reasons for these post-resurrection appearances was so that there would be plenty of eyewitness accounts to verify that Jesus was and is alive. But we can also see something in each of these appearances that will help us understand the power Christ has to change your life. Let's take a quick look at each of these. My hope is that in doing so, you will begin to understand what the resurrection of Christ can also mean to you.

1. Cephas (Peter) – We are given a first hand account of the interaction between Jesus and Peter after the resurrection. If you know the story, you know that a few hours before Jesus' crucifixion Peter denied Christ three times. After having boldly and arrogantly proclaiming that he would be willing to die with Jesus if need be, Peter was unwilling to even admit that he knew Him. Immediately Peter was filled with shame and remorse for his sin.

Perhaps you have done things in your life for which you are very ashamed. You may be a lot like Peter – filled with good intentions, but unable to fulfill those when it mattered most. If that is true for you, you will be happy to know that when Christ appeared to Peter after His resurrection, He **forgave** him. He loved him, received him back and assured him of His place in the Kingdom. This is one of the greatest benefits of Christ's work. He offers you forgiveness, cleansing and a new start.

2. The Twelve – There were actually only eleven at this point because Judas had betrayed Jesus and hung himself. But the label *the twelve* clearly represents the apostles. There are lots of reasons He appeared to the 12. These were His closest friends. These were the ones who'd left everything to follow Him. But from our study in John, I believe one of the effects of Jesus appearing to the twelve was to restore their **hope**. They were devastated by His death. Their dreams and plans and lives were shattered. When they saw Christ alive, they became alive. The reality of the resurrection of Christ can do the same thing for you. If you are near despair. If you have no hope for the present or the future, then look to the risen Christ. In the power of His resurrection, you will find power and hope for your life as well.

3. More than 500 brethren. – When and where this happened we don't know. All we know is that a large number of those with faith had the enormous privilege of seeing the resurrected Christ with their own eyes. What we can say about these people is that the Bible records nothing spectacular about them. They were ordinary people who lived in towns and villages and cities around Israel. But as eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord, that had a **new perspective** on life. The everyday affairs of life would forever be lived out in the presence and reality that Jesus Christ is God. He is alive. They would live their lives with an awareness of their relationship with Him. Isn't that the essence of being a true Christian? If the resurrection influences everything that is important to you – family, friends, work, leisure. . . then you will begin to live, not for yourself, but for One who is alive and part of your life today.

4. James – This was the skeptical half brother of Jesus. Throughout the gospels he is pictured as not believing – at times almost scoffing at Christ. But Jesus went to him after His resurrection. Was it at this time that James became **a follower** of Christ? It could well be. And if so, it tells us that if you are here today and are skeptical of the claims of Christ, perhaps the place for you to start is by looking at the evidence for the resurrection of Christ. The fact is, if Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the dead, then you ought to seriously consider your life and the realities of the truth of the Bible.

5. Apostles – By the apostles, Paul means that wider group of followers who were committed to teaching the things of Christ to others. We can only imagine that in their meeting with Christ He clarified their mission and purpose in life. And of course, if you know Christ and know that He lives, it will, in a similar fashion, shape your **purpose** in life as well.

6. Paul – The story of Paul's conversion is well documented in the Book of Acts. You can read the details in chapters 9, 22 and 26. In Paul we see the dramatic change for good that Christ brings to a person. He sets him free from sin. He gives Him wisdom and vision. He makes him **productive and fruitful** in his laborers.

So I want to ask you to consider these things this morning. This is the power of the resurrection. You can see the resurrected Christ – not physically like these mentioned – but you can see Him and know Him by faith. And the same Christ that forgave Peter, and gave hope to the twelve, and gave meaning to the 500, and conversion to the skeptical James, and purpose to the apostles and fruitfulness to Paul – this same resurrected Christ will meet your needs as well.

But as we close, you need to look again at verse 1 & 2. Here is how you must respond. (Read).

- You have to receive this message. You must confess that it is true.
- You must stand in it. That means you have to not only believe it in your head, but be committed to it by faith. Do you trust Jesus Christ to save you from your sin by His death and resurrection?
- You must hold fast to it in life. The Christian life is a life. It is a commitment to live for the glory of Christ.

In Mark 8, before Jesus died on the cross, He spoke to His disciples very plainly about what was going to happen. He explained to them His coming suffering and crucifixion. He told them that He would rise from the dead on the third day. And then He gave them an application. He told them how to respond to this monumental event. We will close with His Word. *And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*