Resurrection Sunday - 2024

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Date: 31 March 2024

Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0:00] I want to welcome you this morning on behalf of Scott and the rest of the staff and elders. If you're visiting, if you're family, if you're from out of town, we want to welcome you. If you're watching online, we want to welcome you as well.

If you have a copy of the scriptures, go ahead and turn open to 1 Corinthians 15. We'll be looking at verses three to nine this morning. This is what we typically do when we gather. We go through the scriptures book by book, verse by verse.
As a church, one of the things that makes us distinct as we're committed to expositional preaching, it allows you to hear the whole counsel of God and it forces the preacher not to skip the difficult parts of the Bible.
Let me pray for our time and then we'll move into our study. Father, we just want to quiet our hearts this morning. Lord, it's good to be gathered together here this Easter morning, 2024. Lord, I want to pray for every person here that they might leave with more than they came with, that each of us might hear from you. Lord, that you would tell us things, personal things about yourself and Father, that we would experience something of your presence as we gather as a body together. Lord, we love you. We're so thankful to worship you this morning, Jesus. We're so thankful that you are alive and well and Lord, we love the fact that you promised to return. So would you fill your people this morning with your joy despite whatever circumstance, whatever sorrows present might we experience you today? It's in your name we pray Jesus. Amen.
One more time. He is risen. That is the typical Easter greeting amongst Christians for the past 2,000 years since the resurrection. In fact, in some cultures that greeting is also accompanied with three kisses and we have opted as a church to exclude that from the greeting. But that greeting, where does it come from? It actually comes from the testimony of the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus as they encountered the risen Christ and then they come and they give the report to the 11 back in Jerusalem and in Luke 24 they give this report to them. They say, hey, the Lord has risen indeed. So church, He has risen. Amen. Well, let me ask us this question this morning. How critical is it that He rose from the grave? How important is this doctrine to Christians?
[3:04] It's everything, church. It is everything. Because if there's no resurrection, then this morning we have gathered but we are all still in our sins. Additionally, if He did not rise from the grave, nor does He then have horsepower to raise others from the grave as well. In fact, it says in 1 Corinthians 15-17, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. And maybe there's some in this world that would say, well, okay, so you're not really forgiven but at least you Christians, you've lived a good moral life as you follow the teachings of Jesus. So that's sort of a win, right? Not at all. In fact, Paul goes on in Corinthians to say this in 1 Corinthians 15-19, he says, if in Christ we have hoped in this life only, then we are of all people most to be pitied. If Christ didn't rise from the grave, then we are, for believing in that, we are fools. It's really remarkable to me that the Bible encourages us that if

Jesus did not rise from the grave for real, then the Bible says, get out. Shocking. So church, our faith, it stands and it falls on the truthfulness of the resurrection of Jesus. And this morning what I want to do for us is just assure us that there are very good reasons for us to believe. So this morning we're just going to look at seven short verses from really the longest section in Scripture that deals with the resurrection. We're here in 1 Corinthians 15, again looking at verses three to nine together. And perhaps some of you here are maybe visiting and you've never really thought about the Bible or maybe you're kind of averse to the Bible and that's okay. In fact, you don't have to think of the Bible as God's Word, you can simply think of it as a reliable piece of ancient literature. Because all the skeptics, virtually all of them, the leading atheists of the day actually recognize 1 Corinthians as being authentically Pauline and they see it as a reliable piece of ancient

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literature.
In fact, consensus among scholars is that Paul the Apostle wrote this letter around 55 AD and if that be the case, that means that the words that he's sharing about the resurrection are 20 to 25 years after the fact, after the crucifixion. And maybe some of you this morning are thinking 25 years. I don't even remember what I ate for breakfast last week on Thursday. And yet I would propose to us that there are things that we remember to this day from years ago. In fact, Scott mentioned on the Good Friday service that there was an occurrence in 1980 of volcano erupted and many of you today still remember the scene. That's 45 years ago. There are things in our lives that we remember.
Been married 31, 2 years. 32? I think we're in the 32nd year. But that day I remember like yesterday. I remember walking my parents down the aisle and then for some reason we just weren't with it back in that day where I could have just stayed up front with the pastor. No, I then ran to the back. I went down into the basement of the church, ran underneath everybody, came up behind and then popped out from backstage. I still to this day don't know why I did all that.
But it's a vivid memory. We remember things. In church what I want to tell us here is 25 years is nothing in terms of historical forensics. It's astounding that we have this record. Alexander the Great who died in 323 BC. The most recent like the information that we have on his life was written in 20 BC. That's 300 years removed from his life and none of us question do we have the record of Alexander the Great. The testimony of the resurrection from 1 Corinthians 15 is 20 to 25 years after that event. And that's incredibly recent as you think about history. So let's begin together here in verse 3 and 4. See what Paul has to say. He says this, for I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received. That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. That he was buried. That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the
[8:15] Scriptures. So Paul here tells us this truth that he's about to describe. He says this thing that I'm about to tell you is of first importance. Do we understand the limiting statement Paul is making here? He's saying this is the most important thing that I can tell you Corinthian church period. This is it.

Remember this. If you were skydiving today and you had a parachute strapped to the back of yourself, there's one thing you need to remember. When you hit 3000 feet, pull the ripcord. That's the only thing you need to remember. That's of most importance. You know we could read all the books in the Library of Congress. In DC there's 30 million books. 6,000 comics kids. A lot of comics. There's over 500 miles of shelving and you can read every volume and never possess knowledge more important than what Paul is saying here this morning.
This is of utmost importance. This is the most important thing that I can tell you. And what is it? It's the gospel. It's the good news. It has nothing to do with the age of the earth. It has nothing to do with your position on when Jesus will return and how he's going to return. Paul narrows down this central truth in two three specific ingredients. This is the gospel. This is what you need to know. You need to believe in the deity of Jesus, his death for sin, and his resurrection. So let's consider each of these pieces individually first. He says first you need to trust in the deity of Christ. This is the first most important and he says here that Christ. That Christ. Now Christ is not Jesus's last name. These are not words to just to shout out after you five putt. Christ means Messiah.
[10:35] Anointed one. And it alludes to his deity. The critics will say well Jesus never claimed deity. Yes he did. He claimed to be divine. He claimed to be God. Recently we just looked at John 10 in our study and our exposition through John and in verse 30 and 31. Jesus says hey I and the Father are one. And he wasn't exclaiming I am one in purpose with the Father although he was. He was saying I am one in essence with the Father. And in fact the Pharisees knew exactly what Jesus was saying because then in verse 31 it says the Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Why did they want to stone him? Because he was claiming to be divine.

In fact in verse 33 they say you are full of blasphemy because you are making yourself out to be God. Jesus claimed to be God. Muhammad never did. He writes I am no more than a human apostle. Buddha simply claimed to be an enlightened man.
Confucius says as to being divine far be it from me to make any such claim. Jesus is different. He's different than every other religious prophet that ever walked the earth. Jesus is God wrapped in human flesh. It's like Superman. What's his disguise? Who is he? Clark Kent. Does he cease to be Superman when he's Clark Kent? Uh-uh. He's just in disguise. Yeah that's Jesus. God in disguise clothed in human flesh. Why did God come to earth in the person of Jesus? Well the second truth

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that Paul talks about here is because of he came to die. That God in the flesh it says Paul says he died for our sins and then later he says he was buried. This was an excruciating death. This was a despicable way to die. In fact in the Gospel of John he records it in John 19 he says then Pilate took Jesus flogged him so ripped the flesh off of Jesus's back and then the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns put it on his head to array him in purple robe. They came up to him then saying Hail King of the Jews they're mocking
Jesus and they struck him with their hands. And you have to wonder if that were you or me how long would we endure would we put up with that if we had the power of heaven at our fingertips. How long church? And the real pain then began when Jesus hung on the cross and it wasn't six hours of suffocating it was enduring the wrath of the Father for our sins. Perfect God becoming sin on our behalf. Why go through that suffering? Well Scripture says Jesus went through that suffering for the joy that was before him. That's why he endured. See that was God's plan to give us life. Full life here. Eternal life, friendship with God that will transcend this physical life. We couldn't experience this on our own. We couldn't do enough good works. They fall short. Isaiah the prophet says that our righteousness deeds are like a polluted garment. Our very best is not good enough. It took holy God dying on our behalf. God's remedy to deal with our sin. This is the trade of a lifetime. Paul says it this way in 2nd Corinthians 5 21 he says for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. So Jesus paid for our crimes. Crimes he did not commit and he did this willingly church. He did it willingly. Praise God. In World War II Ernest Gordon was a British captive in a Japanese prison camp the River Kwai in Burma where POWs were forced to build the railroad of death which transported Japanese troops to the battlefront. These prisoners were tortured, starved, worked to the point of exhaustion. Nearly 16,000 died.
[15:42] Ernest Gordon survived the horrors of that experience and then he wrote about it in his memoirs in 1962. They made a movie out of his memoirs entitled to End All Wars. Well he describes in his memoirs one occasion when at the end of a work day the tools were being counted before the prisoners returned to their quarters. The head guard declared that a shovel was missing and he began to rant and rave and demanded to know which prisoner had stolen it. Working himself into a paranoid fury he ordered that whoever was guilty to step forward and take his punishment. Well no one stood stood forward and so the guard yelled all die. All die and he cocked his rifle aimed at the prisoners and then at that moment one man stepped forward. Standing at attention he calmly declared I did it. I stole the shovel. Well the Japanese guard at once clubbed the prisoner to death as his friends carried away his lifeless body. The shovels in the tool shed were recounted only to reveal that there was no missing shovel. An innocent soldier dies to protect the lives of all the other POWs. Well that's Jesus. Only the rest of us we all stole shovels. Who would do that for another? There's no greater love. There's no greater love. That's why we're here this morning church.

Amen? Because we've been forgiven of much. We've been forgiven and none of us deserved it. But the good news doesn't end there because the soldier who gave his life comes back to life. He rose from the grave. Jesus died Friday afternoon and resurrected Sunday morning and that's the third ingredient, the third piece of this most important thing that we need to know. This central truth. The Jesus was God that he died for sinners but then thirdly he resurrected from the grave. Paul writes he was raised and literally that means to stand again.
It's physical resurrection. In the Narnia Chronicles, Aslan is butchered. He dies.
A substitute for Edmund's life and then he resurrects with the roar to fill the expanse and that's Jesus. He rose from the grave and so the key question for us this morning is what do we do with that? What do we do with that offer of life?
That if we would just believe in the deity of Christ, His death for sin and His resurrection that we could have new life, what do we do with that? What is our response? And Christianity friends is centrally about trusting in a person, not facts. We're trusting that Jesus did what He claimed to do. That He alone can make your sins that are like scarlet to make them as white as snow. And this is the testimony that we're looking at that Paul recorded 25 years after the event.
[19:09] But here's the thing, it's even older than that. We can even get closer to the cross. In fact, scholars unanimously agree, both those that love Jesus and those that hate Jesus, they agree that these verses we're looking at this morning, they are what is referred to as a New Testament creed. What is a New Testament creed? It's the record of the preaching during the apostolic era of the

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church era. It's the record. This is what was being taught. This is what was being proclaimed. And as you read your Bibles, there's about 12 of these creeds contained within the pages of the New Testament. This one in 1 Corinthians 15, 3 to 7, and then Paul includes himself in 8 verses 8 and 9. This is the most studied of all the creeds. Now, why did these creeds exist? Well, scholars believe that 70% of people in Jesus's day were illiterate. And so in an oral and illiterate society, you give people a jingle. You give them a song, a rhyme, so that they can remember in order to teach. We do that today. It's the ABC song for children. How do you learn the alphabet? You learn the song, right? How about Ring

Around the Rosies, Pocketful Opposites, wonderful little nursery rhyme to teach our children about the Black Death in the 14th century. Wonderful. Hey children, 50 million people died. It's wonderful. Sing that song. Now, how do we know where these creeds show up in the New Testament? There are sections that read differently than the rest of the passage. They're different in rhythm in the Greek.

And their words, and here in particular with Paul, these are words that Paul typically did not use. So this creed, this thing he says, this is of most importance. This existed before Paul. It existed before he wrote it. It was in circulation. So when did Paul receive this creed? Notice in verse 3, he says he received it. He says here, for I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received. So he's telling the Corinthians here, hey, I am giving you what had been given to me. When did Paul get this? We actually have a record in another Pauling book that the skeptics view as authentically Pauline. They accept this as a reliable piece of history. You don't have to see it as the Word of God, but it's a reliable piece of history. And it says here in Galatians chapter 1, Paul writes, verse 18, he says, then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days, but I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now, when does Paul come to faith in Christ? Roughly two years after the resurrection. Okay, scholars agree. It's about two years after the resurrection. On his conversion, he doesn't consult other Christians, and he says that in Galatians 1, verses 16 and 17. He just heads off into the Judean desert. So he's there for three years, and then he says after three years, he says in verse 18, I'm going to go to Jerusalem, and I'm going to go speak to Peter and James, and he says here, hey, after three years I went to Jerusalem for a visit. This word visit, this was not leisure.

This was not social. The word here, the verb to visit is actually the word hysterio, where we get our word history from. So Paul is saying after three years, I went to Jerusalem to do some history, to interview Peter, interview James about the truth. So when Paul went to Jerusalem to interview Peter and James, to talk about his own experiences of meeting Jesus, to find out their experiences, this would have been when Paul would have received this particular creed. So now it's not 25 years removed from the resurrection, it's five years. Which means that Peter and James possessed this creed even before Paul. This is astounding.

[24:07] Do you know the critics? They want to say, you know the resurrection? It's a story that sort of just evolved over time like the telephone game. No, no, no, no. It's what was being taught, proclaimed, preached from the very beginning of the church. In fact, the leading atheist Bart Ehrman, he believes that this creed existed not more than one or two years after the cross. And there are some scholars that date this creed even earlier, putting it six months after the crucifixion. There's one theologian that says it this way about the resurrection.

He says the resurrection is not a belief that grew up with the church. It didn't evolve over time. No, it is the belief around which the church itself grew up. Amen? That's what was being preached from the very beginning. That Jesus Christ, he died according to the scriptures and he was raised. Listen to this list of witnesses which gives credibility to the truthfulness of these claims now. Let's look at the second part of this creed versus five to nine. Paul writes, then he appeared to Cephas Peter, then to the 12, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, last of all as to one untimely born, he appeared to me. I love this. Paul's now inserting himself into the creed. He also appeared to me, for I am the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. We have good reasons to believe in the resurrection. We have witnesses recorded.

This is a reliable piece of historical literature here. We have people that viewed the resurrection. The skeptics actually believe that people believe that they saw something. They see this as actually legitimate. First we have Peter and the 12, something occurred between that Friday night when they

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scattered and then the lies that followed church. It was despair that Friday night and it turned to courage, a courage that could not be extinguished. Virtually all the skeptics agree that Jesus earliest followers had experiences they believed were appearances of the risen Christ and not just experiences but they went on with life not as normal. They were now willing to die for these beliefs. Church, I would contend men do not turn from lambs to lions if what they're embracing is a lie and they know it. They had an experience with the living Christ. Think about Peter. Peter denied Christ the night before he was crucified. He fled and then later on in life the fourth century historian Eusebius he records just before they crucified Peter. The Romans forced him to watch his wife be crucified and Peter says to his wife, my dear, remember the Lord. Remember the Lord. He's alive. It's a very different man than the night when Jesus was arrested and even after that his passion for Jesus it didn't waver.

Tradition tells us that that he demanded to be crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to follow in the death of Jesus, his Savior. You know it's interesting to me as we look at the list of witnesses to the resurrection, the popular rejection for the resurrection in years past has been that the followers of Jesus were delusional. They were hallucinating something that Jesus had resurrected. It's just a hallucination. They wanted it so badly, so badly to be true that they hallucinated this but the record destroys the argument because in verse 6 it says this, he, Jesus, appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time. What do you do with that? So this is mass hallucination. Hallucinations are individual experiences and they're brought on by illness or medication or mind-altering substances and here you have the record of 500 viewing the risen Christ at one time. You know perhaps the most difficult evidence for the skeptics is then what to do with these last two witnesses. What do you do with the testimony of James and what do you do with the testimony of Paul because church these are the two least likely individuals to believe in the resurrection. I had an occasion when I lived on the West Side. I coached football in the mid 90s at a local high school and one of the coaches that I coached with, Kip Houser, he was probably one of the most foul men I'd ever run into in life and I was like this man is so far from [30:01] God. After season ended months go by I'm going to church and there walks in the front doors Kip Houser and he's just like praise Jesus. I'm like what in the world? I did not see that coming. He was the least likely individual I thought would trust in Jesus in this life but he came to love the Lord. These two individuals at the end of this record are the two least likely individuals to trust in the risen Christ. First you have James. This is the brother of Jesus, the half-brother of Jesus. In Mark 3, 21, it's recorded that James and the rest of the family thought Jesus was out of his mind for claiming to be the Messiah. And then what happens to James? He becomes the pastor of the largest church in Jerusalem following the resurrection. His life is forever altered for this belief. Changed. He shouldn't have believed and yet he did because he had experience of seeing the risen Christ. And then you finally have this last individual Paul. Paul the Apostle. This was the critic of the ancient world. This was the leading skeptic of the day. Paul was not teetering on belief. It wasn't like he was like well maybe no he was persecuting Christians. He was hostile towards Christ. He came to faith in Christ and he shouldn't have. See these individuals they had an experience. They believed they saw the risen Christ church. Testimony after testimony after testimony. And what's remarkable is this testimony is within just years of the resurrection. I love that Paul came to faith in Christ because it's a reminder for all of us this morning.

Right? It doesn't matter how far away you are. Doesn't matter what you've done in this life. Doesn't matter how dirty you think you happen to be. No one is too dirty to come to faith in Christ.

So what's the big deal with the resurrection church? Well it means this. It means that in this life we can know forgiveness. We can have our sins forgiven. It means that the hardest things will become untrue. It means that there is a place, a narnia if you will, that actually truly exists. It means that our best days are ahead. It means that the sting of death has been removed for those who trust in Jesus in this life. And it means for those that bower need a Jesus in this life that death is simply a transition home. And that reunion is promised for those who have died in Christ before us. See goodbyes are just for this life. Jesus said it best. He said it this way in John 1419. He says, hey, because I live, because I live, so too will you. And that's a fact. So church, he has risen. And so shall we. Father, we are so thankful for this record. Lord, that it is Your Word, but it's also a reliable piece of history. Lord, it's remarkable that we have this testimony. Lord, we're thankful of the list of people that experienced You risen from the grave. Their lives were forever changed. They're people that shouldn't have lived and given their lives for

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You, but they did because they knew the truth. Lord, thank You that You are still in the business of changing lives. Lord, thank You that You are merciful and kind, long-suffering. Lord, that it's a trustworthy statement that You came to earth to die for sinners. Lord, thank You for the reminder that You're a God that changes lives because of the collection of people that are here this morning. And Lord, we thank You now for the baptisms we're going to celebrate together, reminding us that You continue to rescue sinners to give them new life. Father, we're so thankful that because You live, so will we. And it's in Your wonderful name, Jesus, we pray. And all guys, people said, amen.

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