

Why The Resurrection Matters

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[0 : 00] Well, if you do still have a paper Bible, please feel free to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, as we just read. What I want us to think about tonight is why the resurrection matters.

Maybe you hear that and you think, I know why the resurrection matters. We've been, in Hope Community Church, Allensboro, we've been thinking of the whole storyline of the Bible and we've come to the resurrection, obviously a big part of the story of the Bible and of our world.

And I thought it was something worth sharing. No matter how long we've been in the Christian life, it's something that, in a sense, we never move past because it is our hope in this life and for the next.

And the resurrection is central to, well, the Christian faith. There are some things in life that we cannot live without, aren't there? If we don't have access to clean water, as an obvious example, then we're going to have a problem even staying alive.

Same with food and sunlight, whatever else. As human beings, we need certain things in order to live. And it's the same in Christianity.

[1 : 15] There are certain things that need to be true for Christianity to remain relevant, to be true. And if you remove them, then it becomes meaningless fluff.

There are certain things that can't be jettisoned, that we can't lose, which, of course, is everything that the Bible teaches. We believe the whole scripture is the word of God.

And perhaps we often add little bits ourselves from our culture, our backgrounds. But what directs us is God's word. But even within that, there are some things that are so clear and so important that they're not even debatable in the slightest, really.

And one of these things is the resurrection. If you lose the resurrection, just as if you lose the cross, you lose Christianity. This is the water of the Christian faith.

This is what gives it life. Because it's about Jesus, who, of course, is the living water. We need this. And maybe sometimes, though, the resurrection, we don't think about it quite as much as the cross, for example.

[2 : 29] Perhaps it doesn't play as big a part in our lives. But what is very clear from what Paul writes here and from the gospel accounts of Jesus' life, And even as we see the early church preaching, what they're proclaiming isn't just Christ crucified, but it's the resurrected Lord Jesus.

And so I want us to think about why this matters now. Just under three simple headings. First of all, the resurrection is true. Second of all, the resurrection is essential.

And third of all, the resurrection brings hope. So these three things are the way we're going to look at this tonight.

We may not get into every little detail of this very, very full, rich passage. But these are the three things that I think really stand out and really follow what Paul is saying.

So first of all, the first 11 verses really tell us the resurrection is true. Maybe you've heard, I heard a quote recently, maybe you've heard it as well.

[3 : 38] It doesn't matter if it's true, only that it's believable. Maybe you've heard that. It could probably, and maybe I'm cynical, but it could probably fit in to a lot of what we read in newspapers these days, to perhaps even what we hear politicians say.

We could probably think, it doesn't seem to matter if it's true, only that it's believable. Something maybe just repeated over and over. So it must be true because everyone's saying it, and we've heard it so many times.

It must be true. We perhaps see that, that we ourselves don't always strive to be honest, but we want to be believed.

We want to be trusted. Well, Christianity from the Bible is almost the opposite. It's more like it doesn't matter if it's believable, only that it's true.

No, I think it is believable, let me be clear, and that it does very much matter. But fundamentally, Christianity matters because this is true, because all of it is true, and especially because the resurrection is true.

[4 : 47] And there is a certain type of faith, if you like, that perhaps we could say wants to appeal to the masses, maybe, and goes for what is believable or acceptable rather than what is true.

So we have seen in our own country, even a Christianity, if we can call it that, that perhaps doesn't believe in the resurrection or disbelieves in the death of Christ on the cross or even that Jesus is God.

And you see, that's not really Christianity. In fact, one of the things is the resurrection. 2017, it was reported that a quarter of Christians in the UK didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And I would argue that that makes you not a Christian. This is something we have to believe because it is true. Some might say it's only an idea, something that can give meaning, that can just give hope as a nice idea.

But what Paul is saying here is this is what happened. This is the true event. Jesus rose from the dead. As far-fetched as it might seem, as unbelievable as it might seem, what he is saying is Jesus rose from the dead.

[6 : 08] The first century person was no different to most people in our society. They didn't look at the stories and think, oh yeah, Jesus rose from the dead. That's a normal thing that we see happening.

No. This was shocking. This was unbelievable. You may remember in John's Gospel, Thomas, we know him as doubting Thomas because he wouldn't believe until he saw Jesus and saw where the nails had gone in.

They were no different. But Paul is saying he rose. And he's saying it's not true because he wanted it to be true. In fact, Paul didn't want it to be true. And that's why he persecuted Christians.

Because it was blasphemy to him. It's not true because it's a nice idea. It's true because it's what happened. And what Paul says is, all these people have seen this.

This is eyewitness testimony. The resurrection really happened. And he's saying, if you don't believe me, then you can ask them, Cephas, the 12, the 500.

[7 : 10] Ask them. They saw it. And Paul even says he saw himself in a vision on the road to Damascus. And it wasn't a hallucination.

Multiple people saw him, all these 500 people at the same time. And actually, Paul doesn't mention it. But I think it's worth mentioning. You've maybe heard this. But in the gospel accounts, when Jesus rises from the dead, who is it that goes to the tomb?

Women. And okay, in our society, that's a fairly mundane point. But 2,000 years ago, a woman's testimony wasn't even something that was acceptable in court.

You didn't trust what a woman said. Strange as it sounds to us. But it just wasn't legitimate testimony that a woman was the first witness.

And yet the story of the resurrection hangs on this. And so, if this wasn't true, if these people were making this up, were just trying to tell a good story, spin something, give hope to people out of nothing, then you just wouldn't write it that way.

[8 : 21] You wouldn't say, and then the woman went to the tomb and found Jesus wasn't there and saw him first. That's just not what you would do. The simple explanation is that this is precisely what they saw.

They saw the resurrected Jesus. And so, they wrote down what happened. And they told others what happened. And that was it. And actually, most even unbelieving scholars would at the very least concede that people believed they saw the resurrected Jesus.

There's a lot of evidence for that. Again, people probably get stuck on the concept, can someone really rise from the dead? But we just remember, God is God. If God exists, if he is there, then of course he has the power to do this.

He is all-powerful. He is all-knowing. And he can do these things. But the evidence points that this is true. And of course, that means it matters.

We want the truth. We want what is true and right. And if it is true, as I believe it is, then surely that makes a difference. Surely, that changes everything.

[9 : 31] Not just for people who call themselves Christians, but for everyone in this world. Surely, this makes a difference. Nothing else so huge has happened in the history of the world, has it? Someone rising from the dead.

Surely, that means something. Wouldn't that change your outlook on life, on the future, on what this world is really about? Tim Keller says this. 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.

Resurrection is true. This matters because it is true. And it's the issue that everything hangs on. It is true. And that leads us to our next point, though.

There's a quote from Tim Keller. Because the resurrection is essential. It is central to everything. That really takes in the next few verses from verse 12 to verse 19.

[10 : 30] I've dropped my watch there so I could go on forever tonight. Apologies. Verse 12 to verse 19. The resurrection is essential. It really does change everything.

If it's true, then everything has changed. Probably more than we have time to go into tonight. But Paul does give us some reasons. It's essential. It really is the engine of Christianity.

As a car won't go without power. Well, Christianity doesn't matter without the resurrection. Because our own resurrection, our own future hope of being resurrected from the dead, well, it hangs on the resurrection of Christ.

And verse 12, verses 15 and 16. Most of these verses say that, actually. And it is the great hope of Christianity. Something that Paul goes into more and more through the chapter.

Again, we don't have time to go through it all. But what he's teaching is that we too will rise from the dead. That we will be made new, restored. In fact, the whole world will be.

[11 : 30] The whole creation. The heavens and the earth. The new heavens and a new earth. But none of that is possible. And the hope that that brings, which we'll see in our final point. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

One cannot be true without the other. If Jesus did not rise from the dead. Then we have no hope that we too will rise from the dead. But if Jesus did rise from the dead, to put it more positively. Then a future resurrection is inevitable. That we do have that hope. That our lives here are not all that there is. That our existence here isn't meaningless. That we aren't just hurtling through space. And just trying to make the best of it. But that there is hope. There is hope for us. More on that in our final points. But the other thing that shows how essential this is.

Well, he says, verse 14. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. And your faith is in vain. It matters because if it's not true.

[12 : 30] Then even our faith is in vain. The thing that those of us who believe have dedicated our lives to is in vain. And of course, Paul's saying it's not in vain.

But if the resurrection isn't true. Then the whole system of Christianity. The whole belief in Jesus falls apart. Because Jesus said he would rise. And he based his promises on that.

And the defeat of death. And so on. And if the resurrection isn't true. Then Jesus died for nothing. And actually turning up here is a waste of time. And crucially for me at least.

Preaching is in vain. Even me standing here. People standing here week by week. It's in vain. If the resurrection didn't happen. But as we said, the resurrection is true.

And it is so essential to what we do. In fact, if the resurrection didn't happen. We'd be misrepresenting God. As Paul says in verse 15. This is what Christianity stands or falls on.

[13 : 33] In other words. If you don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Then you don't follow Christianity. Christianity. You don't have faith in the God of the Bible.

In Christ. It is really that important. It is essential. Without it, we don't have faith. And actually, we're still in sin. Without the resurrection.

That's what Paul tells us. Verse 17. If Christ has not been raised. Your faith is futile. And you are still in your sins. Without the resurrection. There is no forgiveness. We often talk about the cross. And it's forgiveness.

Of course. Rightly. But tied to that. It's all part of the same event. Is the resurrection. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead. We have no hope of forgiveness. And the guilt and shame. That we may feel for our sins. That Christ has dealt with. The punishment that he has dealt with. The justice that he has taken on his shoulders. At the cross. If he didn't rise from the dead. Then we are still under that punishment.

[14:27] We are still under that sentence. And we don't have forgiveness. But Paul says. He is raised from the dead. As we will see. And the good news is. That Christ did rise from the dead.

As we will see. We are not under the rule of sin. When we have placed our faith. In the resurrected Lord Jesus. Forgiveness requires all the death of Jesus. And the resurrection.

And so as Paul sums it up. If in Christ. Verse 19. We have hope in this life only. We are of all people. Most to be pitied. Sums it up.

Doesn't it? If. If. If. Christian hope is just for this life. Then. It's. It's meaningless. Isn't it? But.

There is hope. You know. Paul puts it. In verse 18. If there is a resurrection. Then those who. Also who have fallen asleep in Christ. Have perished. What he's saying is. Those who have died.

[15:23] It's the end. There is nothing more. That. Is it. There's no hope for a better future. There's no hope for. For. For anyone. It would be sad to.

To devote our lives to something that wasn't. True. And again. This is what makes the resurrection so. Essential. Everything. Hangs on it. The hope. Of Christianity.

Is utterly dependent on. The resurrection. Hope. Not just for this life. But. Forever. And you know. When we think about all these points. From the. The other side.

They've kind of been stated negatively. So far. But when we think about them. From the other side.

Well. We will be resurrected from the dead. Because the resurrection. Is true. Because Jesus has risen from the dead.

We too. Will rise. From the dead. And that means. A lot. As we're going to see. That. Preaching. Is. Worth. Worth doing. That faith. Is. Worth having.

[16:16] Because. Jesus has risen from the dead. We can trust. In Jesus. In other words. Because he has risen from the dead. He has the power. To do what he said. Which is to forgive us. To bring us. To eternal.

Life. And that we are not. Still. In sin. That our sins really have been wiped clean. That he has taken the punishment. That our sins deserve. That he has taken it all on his shoulders.

That he has taken it. To the grave. To the grave. And he has risen. From the dead. And we are forgiven. We are not still in our sin. When we have placed our faith. In Christ Jesus. And that our hope is not just for this life only.

That our hope is forever. For all eternity. It's hard for us to conceive of sometimes. Because we know the suffering of this life. And we can't imagine having to live forever. Even.

But it is in living in perfection. In happiness. In joy. In a place of no tears. Or pain. Or suffering. That is why the resurrection is so essential.

[17:14] It means all these things. We have. But third. And lastly. The resurrection. It brings us hope. If that wasn't obvious already.

The resurrection brings hope. To us. We may struggle. In this life. We may suffer. A lot. Actually. And the Christian hope isn't.

In this life. That we'll have an easy life. In some ways. Jesus almost. Not quite promises the opposite. He says. Truly the world. Hates the disciples. In this life. You will have.

Tribulation. But what could be better. Than knowing the end. And being able to live with. With one eye fixed. Onwards and upwards. Knowing the end of the story.

Knowing that. Even beyond our lives perhaps. That we will rise again. That this world will be made right. What could bring more hope than that. That what we go through here. Isn't meaningless.

[18:11] Isn't pointless. That our lives. Actually have value. To the creator. Of all things. Does that not bring hope. And I mean hope in the biblical sense.

We often think of it in terms of. A vague thing. A nebulous thing. Going against all reality. And common sense. But biblical hope is. Waiting for. For something that has been promised.

And we have been promised eternal life. And we hope in that. And we hope with trust. In the one who has promised it. Our savior. Christ Jesus. Jesus. It's not the hope of. I hope I'm rich.

I hope I get a good meal tonight. All these things. It's the hope knowing that God has promised something. Of real value. Pity. As Paul says.

If the resurrection. Hasn't happened. Isn't. Our lot. In life. We are not. To be pitied actually. Because. As Paul says. But in fact.

[19:04] Christ has. Been raised. From the dead. He is the first fruits. As he says. In verse. 20. Meaning that. Because he rose from the dead.

First. Everyone who. Who believes in him. Will also rise. And be with him forever. One day. Everyone will be. Resurrected. But only. His people.

Those who are in Christ. Will be with him. Forever. Forever. He was. Just the beginning. The rest of the harvest. It may take some time. We don't know when. It will come like a thief in the night.

We're told. But it will come. And we will. Be. With him. And that does. Truly mean. Hope. For us. You know. We read this. This stuff about.

By a man came death. Verse 21. By a man. Has come also. The resurrection. Of the dead. For as in Adam. All die. So also. In Christ. Shall all. Be made.

[19:59] Alive. Maybe that. Doesn't make. A whole lot of sense. To some of us. I don't know. I certainly. Had to read it. A few times. When I first read it. The Bible.

Tells the story. At the very beginning. God created. Everything. Good. Very good. In fact. And he made. Mankind. In his image. Male. And female.

Adam and Eve. Were there. But the story. Is. Goes. How they. Disobeyed. And. Death. Well. Sin entered. Into the world. The wrongdoing. That we all do. That we take part in.

But it started with them. And through that. Death. Came. Into. The world. That is the reason. We face this. And we have had to face up to that. That reality. Of.

Of mortality. And no one likes to. To think about it. But it's there. We are mortal. We. We will die. There is an axe. Ready to.

[20:53] To fall over our lives. And all that can be traced back. To Adam. And Eve. Going. Against. God. We do the same as they did. With our own. Disobedience.

To God. And that means a whole lot of things for us. Our sin. And it means the destruction of our world. And. I'm not talking about. Our.

Our personal sin. But just in general. That the brokenness of this world. Means. All the illnesses we face. The. The destruction of the world. Everything that is wrong. Can be traced. Back to that. But what we're being told here.

And this is why there's hope for us. Is that. That Jesus has come to undo all that. That he has come. To make these things. Right. Because. As a.

By a man. Came death. By a man. Has come also. The resurrection. Of. The dead. What Jesus has come to do. Is to undo all. These. Wrong. Things. As in Adam.

[21:48] All die. So also. In Christ. Shall all. Be made. Alive. Being one of Jesus's people. Means. Being. Made alive.

Means. Eternal life. And everything. That comes. Along with that. That's what we need. That is the hope. Of the resurrection. And. And.

That hope. Is explained. Jesus will reign. He is the king. And all will be resurrected. And all who belong. To Christ. It's faith that is essential for this. We must. Have trust in Jesus.

To have this hope. And this hope is. That death. Is. Defeated. Because. We could say a lot. But I want us to focus on these words.

Of. Of verse 26. The last enemy. To be destroyed. Is. Death. Death. Will. Be. Defeated.

[22:42] That is the great hope. That we need. There is not one person. In this room. Who can say that they don't need this hope. Because we all must face up. To this. But the good news.

Of Jesus's resurrection. Is that one day. He will come back. Everything under subjection. To him. And we will rise from the dead. And if we are in Christ.

If we have placed our faith. In him. If we are one of his people. We will. Be resurrected. To. Eternal life. With him. In the new heavens. And the new earth.

He is defeated. In one sense. Death is already defeated. Because he's risen from the grave. And yet as we said. He's the first fruits. There's so much more. To come. And one day. Everyone. Will be raised from the dead. Just.

As he was. Death is defeated. Paul will say later. In this chapter. Oh death. Where is your victory? Oh death. Where is your sting? The sting of death. Is sin. And the power of the sin.

[23:36] Of sin. Is the law. But thanks be to God. Who gives us victory. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. He has victory over death. Even.

Through. Our Lord. Jesus Christ. We have that. Victory. Death is still there. We know that. But it's victory. Has been taken. It's sting. Has been taken. And we can look forward. To being resurrected. From the dead. And this is something. That's so much. Better than anything else. This world can offer. Some people believe. In reincarnation. You know. Coming back. As something else. Maybe I'll be reincarnated. As a dog. Or something. I don't know. But what the resurrection offers. Is that we will come back. As us. As really us. But better. As we. As we should be. As God intended. Us. To be. It is a physical thing.

[24 : 31] It is a. A real thing. Maybe some of us. We've. Perhaps got low self. I don't want to be me. But. We'll be. As we. As we should be.

As God wants us to be. It is a real. Physical. Thing. That we will be raised. From. The dead. It's. You know. A misspent youth. Perhaps. But watching the Simpsons. Growing up on TV. Every night. And you know. Sometimes they'd. Go to heaven. I don't know why. And it would be kind of the clouds. And you know. People playing harps. And halos. And you know. It was. It all just looked.

A bit silly. Because it is silly. It's a cartoon. And I suppose. It's kind of. Mocking. And that's kind of the view. That people have. Of what it is. To sort of. End up in heaven.

To be a Christian. And it's not right. Because it's wonderful. To be there. Praising God. But what we're promised. Actually. Is. Is. Is real life. Is.

[25 : 27] The things they should have been. Physical. Resurrection. From. The dead. That is what he gives. And that is so much. Better. Than. Than. Reincarnation.

Than. Floating on the clouds. Than. Than. Just nothing. Happening. If nothing happened. Or death. Then. This life really is. Meaningless. But.

We know. In ourselves. At our core. That this life. Does. Mean. Something. And so. Our greatest. Need. Need. Is met. By the resurrection. And even if we have. Comfortable lives here.

We know. Death is. Inevitable. We know. It's coming. But we have that hope. That it's not. The end. That if we are in Christ. If we're following him.

We will live. Forever. Maybe though. For you. Life isn't so. Comfortable. There is the. The realities. The harsher. Realities of life. To face up to.

[26 : 22] And yet. There is hope. For the future. That the suffering. Actually of this life. Is incomparable. To what is promised. To God's people. To being resurrected.

From the dead. Paul. Says. When he writes to the Romans. For I consider. That the sufferings. Of this present time. Are not worth comparing. With the glory.

That is to be. Revealed. To us. Sufferings of this present time. Not even to be compared. To the glory. To what God has in store.

For his people. Paul. Probably suffered. More. Than most of us. Are going to. Persecution. Being. Stoned. Being flogged. Eventually.

Being executed. For. His faith. In the resurrected. Lord Jesus. But he could say. From. From prison even. The sufferings.

[27 : 17] Of this present time. Are not worth comparing. With the glory. That is to be revealed. To us. The resurrection. Truly. Gives. Us hope. Hope. Not just for this life.

Yes. Hope for this life. Of course. But hope. For the future. Hope that. That. Death is not the end. That the way we are now. Is not. Not how we'll always be.

But that we will be. Raised. Risen from the dead. Again. And with. Jesus. Forever. Physically. Made new. Restored. That. All the futility of life.

Will be undone. All the decay. Will be. Undone. And so. What else can we do. But live. In light. Of that hope. Live. Wanting others. To know that hope.

Live. With the. The joy of knowing. That there is. Something more. Because we are living. In what we might call. The now. And the not yet. Many call it that. We are looking ahead.

[28 : 11] To the resurrection. And yet at the same time. We live. And struggle. In this world. But we have hope. For the future. And we are not alone. That Jesus is. With us.

That he has. Died. He has risen again. But he has not forgotten us. As he says. At the end of Matthew's gospel. I am with you always. To the very end of the age. We have hope in this life.

We have hope in the future. And it is all centred. On the resurrected Jesus. Who is with us. By his spirit. And so. We live in this world. We care for it. We. We love others.

We do our jobs. And so on. But always. Always. With the hope. Never despairing. Never too in love. With this world. With the hope. That just as Jesus has died.

And risen from the dead. So even if we die. We will rise. From the dead. And we'll be with him. Forever. In the place of no tears. Or pain. Or suffering.

[29 : 07] But be with him. Where we are loved. And cared for. Where the sun. Does not stop shining. Because the light. Is given. By Christ himself. May God. Bless. Each one of us.

Let's pray to him. Our heavenly father. We do. Pray to you. Rejoicing. In the hope. That we have. The hope. Of glory.

The hope. Of the resurrection. Lord. There is. So many wonderful things. In your word. That you have taught to us. Thank you. That we do have this hope.

And Lord. Especially as we do face. Suffering in this life. We. We know that you are not. Indifferent to it. But that just as Christ. Has suffered and died. He has also risen from the dead.

And you understand. Our suffering. But. You have also given us hope. That. No matter what. We will be. With you forever. Lord. Often we feel praying.

[30 : 03] Come. Quickly. Lord Jesus. And we know that you are coming. And we long for that day. Where we will see you face to face. And we'll be with you forever. In the new heavens. And the new earth.

Sustain us by that hope. Give us grace every day. In all our trials. And bless each one of us. We pray it all. In the name of Jesus. And for his sake.

Amen. Amen.