

Has the resurrection made any difference to your life?

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Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] Pray with me. We praise you, O God, for your great salvation.! We praise you for your precious Son, Jesus Christ.

! Through his sacrificial death, we are forgiven.! Because he came forth from the prison house of the grave, showing that the claims of justice have been satisfied, that the devil's rule has been defeated.

We have been set free and we've given life abundantly. What more could be done that you have done, O Christ? Your resurrection brought us peace.

Your ascension brought us hope. Your prayers is our comfort. We thank you and we praise you, O Lord, our Redeemer. And as your word comes forth this morning, will you prepare all our hearts to hear rightly and to listen and obey.

And ultimately to come to call upon your saving name. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Good morning.

[1:10] And welcome to the Church of the Holy Trinity. I want to say again, how happy we are to have you worshipping with us this Easter Sunday, if you are a visitor or if this is your first time among us.

I want to tell you right off the bat about who we are and what we believe. And in doing so, I hope also to remind all of you who are members here, why we exist as a church.

We are a small congregation in Onondaga Hill, and we believe in a great God who is mighty to save. We believe he came into the world, he created, and took our frail human nature.

He lived a sinless life and died on the cross for our sins. We believe that he rose bodily from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven.

And because of his life, because of his death, and because of his resurrection, we have been forgiven of our sins. And we have a new abundant life with God.

[2:20] Now many of us here are living, walking, breathing examples of God's power to deliver people from death to life in Christ.

And if you have any questions about Jesus and his free offer of salvation, I would love to talk to you about it. Come and find me during the coffee hour after service today down in the Undercroft.

Or email or call me during the week. My contact info is on the bottom of the bulletin that you have in your hands there. Now, I want to ask you an important question this morning.

This question is for all of us. Whether you've been a Christian all your life or you're just exploring what this Christianity thing is all about.

The question is this. What difference will it make to your life if Jesus was still in the tomb? What difference will it make to your life if Jesus was still in the tomb?

[3:25] You know, a few years ago, a story came out in National Geographic. Now, you ought to know that National Geographic is just a level above tabloids.

Especially around Christmas and Easter, they come up with all these crazy stories. Well, what the story says is that archaeologists have discovered what they believe to be the grave site of Jesus. So, Nat Geo speculated in their magazine, what if they discover Jesus' bones? What would that mean for the Christian faith?

Well, some pastor was interviewed and he said this, I quote, if the bones of Jesus were to be discovered, it would be a big finding.

It would cost us to adjust our understanding of Christianity. Yes. But ultimately, the truth and power of Christianity will remain undisturbed.

[4:25] We will still have all of Jesus' teachings and we would have all of his stories and we would have his wonderful example of love for the outcast. And even though Easter wouldn't be about the physical resurrection of Jesus, we would go on celebrating the example and testimony of this great man of God who lives in our hearts and who inspires us to be kind to others.

Even if the tomb wasn't empty, this man says, our hearts would still be full. Now, that seems nice. At least we can, it's all premises, at least we can still use Jesus as an example in our earthly life. Even if the resurrection wasn't real. But let me read to you Apostle Paul's answer to this same question of what if Jesus had not risen.

This is what Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. They, those who have already fallen asleep in Christ, have perished.

[5:49] There is no hope after death, Paul says. If in Christ, we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most miserable.

Of course, Paul added, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. Do you see the difference between those two answers?

I think Paul is right. And the other guy is dead wrong. If there is no resurrection, friends, I wouldn't be here this morning.

Or in any other church for that matter. There will be no need for a church. No need for pastors and preachers. We will shut up shop. But, Christ is risen.

And because of this fact of history, everything has changed. Jesus' claim about himself is not that of a liar or lunatic, but it is the claim of God himself.

[7:01] It is divine revelation. Not only that, but we also, also all of us who believe in his name, we can be assured because of his resurrection of the truthfulness of our faith and of the power by which the church stands and operates.

That is the basis of our confidence. There's more. Because Jesus rose from the dead, you can be assured that your sins are forgiven. that Christians who have died are present with Christ.

That because he is risen, there is hope for life in this, there's hope in this life and there's hope for life after death. Because of his resurrection, everything that is sad and painful and evil one day will become untrue.

But on what basis? Do we have this confidence and assurance? Let's look at the account that we have here in Luke 24. If you, if you will open, I think it's on page 1051 of your pew Bible.

Luke tells us in this account about a group of women. they went early in the morning before the sun came up to the tomb of Jesus.

[8:28] They took spices with them to anoint the body of Jesus. Now, these were the women in the previous chapter, towards the end of chapter 23. They had followed a man named Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb where Jesus was buried two nights prior, Friday night.

So they knew where they were going. Now, while they were going to anoint the body of Jesus, while many of Jesus' male disciples were in hiding, these women had been high witnesses to his agonizing death on the cross.

They saw him. They saw Jesus' agony on the cross. They loved Jesus. They had followed him all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem. And it is in the depth of their sorrow and loss out of love for their Lord that they wanted to properly prepare his body because the preparation that Joseph had done two nights prior had been rushed because the Sabbath was approaching.

So they came to the tomb. They came to the tomb in total puzzlement to find that the stone had been rolled away. But more than that, they also found that the body of their Lord was not even there.

Luke said that they were perplexed. They were at a loss. Now, this discovery seems beyond their comprehension.

[10:01] We can only imagine how this will have added to their already overwhelming sense of grief. Imagine the body of your loved one stolen. Gone.

Nowhere to be found. We don't know what they were thinking but they were, this is added to their sorrow and their grief and their worry. But at that very moment, two men in dazzling apparel, Luke tells us, stood by them.

Men who caused them to be frightened and bowed their faces to the ground. Now, this doesn't mean that these men were threatening them or intended to do their mom, the description of the women's reaction to the men tells us that these men are not mere men.

They are angels. They are God's messengers from heaven. And whenever mere human beings are in the presence of those who have been before the majesty of God, there is a sense of awe and holy fear that descends on us.

So that's what these women were feeling. They recognized they are in the presence of messengers of God from heaven. And while the women were bewildered, the angels also, it seems like the angels also seemed puzzled by these disciples' presence here.

[11:18] Why are you seeking the living among the dead? They asked. See, while heaven is rejoicing at the vindication of Jesus, while heaven is joyous at the comprimence of the great work of salvation, these disciples of Jesus, for whom he came to accomplish it, are sad, bewildered, and grieving.

It is as if the angels were saying to them, what are you doing here? This is the last place you should be looking for Jesus. Why are you seeking the living among the dead?

you know, that question is worth asking ourselves as well. There are some out there who believe in Jesus, a great moral teacher and a role model, like that man that I quoted earlier.

Jesus is just someone who is an example we can celebrate and who inspires us to be kind to others. The only problem about that is this. This kind of Jesus, as described, cannot save you from your sin.

And that is the problem after all, isn't it? Sin. It's what separates us from God, our creator. It's what leads to death and hell.

[12:41] And the only way out of this fate is for someone else to take our place. For this person to endure all of God's wrath for our sins upon himself.

So, the man I quoted earlier has miscalculated the Christian faith, just as Jesus' disciples have miscalculated in this story.

Someone had said that these disciples, the disciples of Jesus, were the earliest unbelievers.

Granted, they were also the first believers.

But we see in Luke that it's never too early, never too early to believe in Jesus. But it can become too late. It is resurrection morning in this story.

They should be rejoicing in Jesus' word because he had told them in Luke 9.22 and he, in fact, from Luke 9 and multiple times on in the Gospel of Luke, he had told them it is necessary, repeatedly he told them, it is necessary that the Son of Man should suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and be killed and be raised the third day.

[13:55] Jesus had told them everything that would happen. And it is the third day. Resurrection morning, but they're still looking for a dead Jesus. Although the women showed more, they showed more bravery than the men, they at least sought out Jesus, burial spot, but in total, they also have miscalculated.

None of them, none of Jesus' disciples were looking for a resurrected Jesus. If I may ask, where are you this morning? Are you seeking the living among the dead?

How can we have faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for our salvation? Because the fact remains, friends, the fact remains, he is risen.

The body is no longer in the tomb. The stone has been rolled away. Yet these men and women, the apostles, hiding away, they did not believe and were not expecting a resurrected Jesus.

Let's look at the angels' words to the women. He is not here, but has risen. Remember, they said, remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

[15:17] They called, the angels of God called the women to remember Jesus' own words that attested to these events. Our Lord's own words in the Gospel, repeatedly saying, to his disciples, I am going to go to Jerusalem where I will be killed and on the third day I will rise.

Our Lord's words is what these messengers from heaven called his disciples to remember.

Remember his words. He is God's chosen king, priest, and prophet.

He holds the threefold offices that bear witness to himself and his prophecy of the salvation that he came to fulfill is true and trustworthy. So remembering Jesus' words means that you hear and believe the good news about his death and resurrection and that all the benefits that comes with

that, which is peace with God, your sin forgiven, abduction into his family, can all be yours by believing in his name.

verse 8 tells us that these women did remember his words. How do we know they remembered? They were the first humans in history to declare the good news to the world that death has been conquered, sin has been defeated.

They went straight to the leaven. That's the apostles, his closest friends. They went to them and they told them all they had seen and all they had remembered of Jesus' words and how it must be true.

[17:00] But Luke tells us, Luke, by the way, tells us the identity of some of these women. Mary Magdalene, a woman Jesus delivered from bondage to seven demons. Johanna, who was the wife of Herod, Herod's steward, a woman who was presumably of prominence, and Mary, the mother of James.

These women, Luke told us earlier in his gospel, have supported Jesus and his disciples from their own possessions. These women are well known to the disciples.

I mean the eleven. They've been following Jesus from Galilee. So it's not like a bunch of strangers are coming to the apostles. These are well known disciples. But still, upon hearing their testimony, we are told that their words seem to the apostles to be an idle tale.

They did not believe them. Idle tale. That word in the Greek means useless chatter. It's as if someone was delirious from high fever.

So, in other words, these men evaluated the women's words as nonsense to them. And they discarded them. They were operating under the foolish assumption of their time that women's words were not to be trusted.

[18:30] But God doesn't operate under foolish human assumptions. Do you know that? The good news of a saving work is not copyrighted or licensed to a select group of acceptable people.

Once these women believe the words of their Lord, understood what has taken place, they did what all who believe in Jesus did in the Bible.

they went out and proclaimed His great salvation to all who will hear. I hope that's an encouragement and a challenge for us this Easter morning.

Now, there's a third act in this story. Peter. Peter would earlier betray Jesus.

Peter rose and ran to the tomb. He heard the women's account so he rose and ran to the tomb. And we're not told why.

[19:38] I think he started to remember Jesus' words which attested to the reports the women gave. So he ran to confirm just maybe it could all be true.

And upon getting there he peeked in into the tomb and saw and emptied the tomb. Luke added this extra detail for us. He saw linen cloths used to wrap the body of Jesus by themselves.

Now that's that that seems like a throwaway detail but just in case there are people like the National Geographic around in those days and those people are always around.

These this little detail will dispel any fabrication that his body was stolen. Because it would defy logic for you to go steal a body and then first unwrap the linen and carry the body.

You're making your job messier. So so there's a good important slight detail which which which which lends credence to the fact that this isn't that the body of Jesus was stolen.

[20:48] Peter also was an eyewitness in this story to the empty tomb and we're told that he was just as perplexed just like the women had been.

He went home marveling at what he saw. This means that he was astonished. But here's the thing friends astonishment alone does not lead to belief.

It didn't for the women they were astonished when they saw the empty tomb. It didn't for Peter it will not it will not for you. The only the empty tomb only leaves us bewildered and questioning.

Belief belief comes when we are reminded of Jesus' own words about his mission on earth. But here's the good news although we cannot see the empty tomb so I don't I don't believe that whatever grace that they find there is is the grace that of Jesus we can see the empty tomb but despite what the tabloids may claim you can hear you can hear this morning and you can read Jesus' own words about himself in the pages of scripture.

You can hear what he says about himself that he had to suffer and die and rise on the third day. I invite you to hear the good news about his resurrection this morning.

[22:41] If you're yet to come to saving faith in him come come I beseech you place your trust in him. you know I asked earlier what difference will it make to your life if Jesus was still in the tomb but that's really an apathetical question because Jesus is not in the tomb.

The real question though based on the facts of history is this has it made any difference to your life that he is risen? Has it make any difference to your life that the tomb is empty?

How you answer that question will make all the difference for your eternity. Let us pray.

Let us Let us pray.