

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 20, 2022
7th Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 45:3-8a, 15; Luke 6:27-38
Hymns: 466; 464; 307; 313:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ...

¹⁶For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

²⁰But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Reality of the Christian faith.

In this epiphany season in which we have been focused on the manifestation or revealing of Jesus' glory we have been focused on how Jesus' glory is revealed in the lives of Christians. We live to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ.

This is one way that we address the question, "Is the Christian faith real and true? Many in world will judge the answer to that question by looking at those who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ. They will

look at our lives to see if we are different from the world, or if we blend in with the world in its pursuits of worldly pleasures and treasures. This will include how we respond to the trials and tribulations of life. They will judge what our goal in life is perceived to be. Are we all about the here and now, or do we focus our lives on the eternal life we have in the person of Jesus Christ?

The reality of the Christian faith, the substance of what we believe is not found within ourselves, but rather it is found in the person of Jesus Christ, and the truth about His life, death, and resurrection. It is upon this truth we have our foundation for life and upon which we build our hope of heaven. It is through this truth that we are brought to faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. This faith leads us to love one another, even our enemies, even as Christ loved us.

In our text today we look to Jesus' glory as it is revealed in His resurrection that we might have the assurance of forgiveness and everlasting life.

**THEME: God's Forgiving Grace Is Revealed
in Jesus' Resurrection.**

One of the problems that the Apostle Paul had to address with the Corinthian congregation was the idea that a physical resurrection was not something we should expect. They were unduly influenced by the ideas and philosophy of the society in which they lived. So, it came down to faith in Christ being about this life, and how trust in God made this life superior. And then you died. This false teaching was undermining the hope of life and salvation that we have in Christ Jesus, as well as the comfort that brings us in the face of death. Paul addressed this head on in this epistle in what many people think of as the resurrection chapter. By inspiration Paul teaches --

I. Resurrection Reality as a Foundational Truth of the Gospel.

We read in our text: *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ... ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”*
(1 Corinthians 15:12,16,17)

Paul as well as the rest of the Apostles were very clear and consistent in preaching the gospel of Christ. They declared the truth that Jesus was crucified, that He died and was buried, and the third day Jesus rose again

from the dead. However, some taught that this resurrection was limited to Jesus. While they confessed that Jesus both died and rose again, they were not willing to confess that it necessarily followed that all people will rise again on the last day.

Paul declared that there was an absolute correlation between Christ's resurrection and the reality of resurrection for all people. This is a foundational truth of the gospel. Jesus went to the cross and the grave as true man, as our brother. He died for us and was buried as our brother. Jesus rose again on the third day as our brother, as the Son of Man!

The proper teaching of resurrection beginning with Jesus' resurrection is foundational to the Christian faith. It has everything to do with the reality of the forgiveness sins. If the one is not true, then the other is not true. If there is no resurrection of the dead than Christ did not rise. If Christ did not rise than the whole body of Christian teaching falls. If Jesus' body remained in the grave than death was victorious. Since sin brought death, that would mean that sin was victorious. If Jesus' body remained in the tomb, then there is no evidence that God the Father was satisfied with the sacrifice made by Jesus upon the cross. Indeed, the opposite would be true that the death that Jesus died would have been **insufficient** for saving the world from the curse of sin. Our faith in Jesus would be futile, or pointless. We would still be in our sins.

In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we read how "*(righteousness) shall be imputed (or credited) to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,* ²⁵ *who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.* (Romans 4:24-25) We believe in the one true God who raised Jesus from the dead, and by that act of resurrection God declared the world to be justified. By Jesus' resurrection God said the debt of sin was paid **in full**.

Jesus' resurrection proclaims the grace of everlasting life. It is --

II. Our Hope of Glory unto Everlasting Salvation.

Again, the truth about resurrection is foundational to the Christian faith. Forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in Jesus' resurrection, as well as the hope of everlasting life. Where would we be without the hope of everlasting life? And yet even today there are Christian churches that say it doesn't matter if Jesus physically rose from the dead ! They say that all that matters is that we are open, and loving, and kind, and charitable to all. They don't even call for repentance and turning away from sin. Again, let's read the truth from our text:

*“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!
¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in
this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.
²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of
those who have fallen asleep.” (v. 17-20)*

Our hope in Christ is **not** for this life only! If it were, we would be among the most pitiable people on earth, living under some false delusion. Christ **is** risen from the dead. God’s grace in Christ extends beyond this life. Jesus was the **first fruits** of those who have fallen asleep. That means that many more will follow, indeed, the masses of humanity out there in the world will all rise again. Jesus’ resurrection proves that resurrection is real.

That means everything to us. We have all had dearly loved people die. We have buried them. Without a risen Lord Jesus Christ we would grieve like those who have no hope! Jesus teaches us that temporal death, this body of corruption that returns to earth from which it came, **is temporary**. That is why the Holy Spirit caused Paul to refer to those who have died in faith as those who have fallen asleep.

Remember when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter? What did Jesus say about that dead little girl? He said “She is not dead but sleeping.” (Mark 5:39) *“Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’”* (Mark 5:41) That is Jesus’ power to call the dead to life. Those whom we love shall be called to life again. And in Jesus’ own resurrection we have the sure and certain truth of eternal life. He shall call us from our graves. We shall live with Him forevermore. Jesus *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”* (Philippians 3:21)

That is the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that impacts our view of life and how we deal with tragedy in life, and how we interact with our neighbor, even loving and forgiving our enemies. Jesus is our crucified and resurrected Savior. He died for our sins and was raised again, that we might know the reality of resurrection for all of us, and through faith in His name possess the joy of sins forgiven, and the hope everlasting life.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)