

SERMON Introduction

Resurrection Benefits Matt 28:1-8; 1 Cor 15: 50-58

We've been in a series on 1 Peter but today we'll look at the topic of the Day. It's not a big departure because 1 Peter has three direct references to the Resurrection of Christ. And He was an eyewitness and the one who led the church in replacing Judas. Then on the day of Pentecost, he gave the first post-resurrection sermon recounted in the NT. Acts 1:3, 1:15; 2:14ff; 3:11ff

There is a lot of talk about equality, or lack of it, in our society today. Equality of opportunity. Equality of income or equality of outcome; education equality, gender equality, racial equality, etc. Those are certainly some hot button topics of conversation.

Honestly, those topics can lead to some heated discussions – WE'RE NOT GOING THERE TODAY. Some of those issues can be hard to define and measure, and deep down we all know that there are some things that will never be equal in life.

I'm 5'9", so I'll never get an equal number of rebounds as the guy who is 6'8". I'm a short, stocky, old man with a beard (2nd grader at NLE), so I'll never be asked to do a cover on GQ. Some of you are very talented in music, art, sports, craftsmanship, etc. I'll never be your equal, even if I were to practice all day long. You have natural talents and gifts that I just don't have.

There are too many variables to consider or control to insure that everyone gets an equal share of everything.

EX: If you have kids have you ever tried to cut the last piece of cake, or pie, or brownies into equal pieces so that both kids are happy? Has it ever worked? Someone always ends up using that phrase that every parent hates, "That's not _____ (fair)!!"

True, and as adults we know that life isn't fair.

BUT there is something that is the great equalizer of all our jobs, INCOMES, talents, abilities, race, gender, opportunities, pieces of the pie, and the routine activities of life

What is the great equalizer???? DEATH. Isn't that cheery news.

We all have the same odds of dying. There is no betting line in Vegas on the probability of death. It's a sure bet. There is no over/under on the odds of dying. The only variables are how and at what age. Death is inevitable, individual, and it's forever.....OR IS IT????

Easter IS A GAMECHANGER.

It's a bracket buster. Everybody who saw Jesus die and who saw him placed in the tomb would have bet that he'd stay there – forever. BUT HE DIDN'T

That's why we are here today. Easter is a special day to celebrate the victory of Jesus over death, and in defeating death, Jesus affirms the value of life, here and now. It is a celebration of eternal life with God, for those who know Him through faith in Jesus.

DID YOU KNOW that something dangerous can happen to Christians a few days after Easter?? – we forget that Jesus walked out of the grave. We don't forget the historical fact; we forget to live a life based on our resurrection faith. We get Easter amnesia.

Today I want to remind you of 3 resurrection benefits that enable you to live with Christ centered stability, hope, and joy.

If you're here today and you're not sure about the whole Jesus resurrection thing, then we're glad you're here, and you're in good company because the original followers of Jesus weren't too sure about it either. But in the face of the facts and the testimony of hundreds who saw him, the small group of Jesus followers became fearless martyrs for their faith in the Risen Christ.

So if you've got questions, this is the right day to deal with them, because the whole faith hinges on the resurrection of Christ. Maybe you've been turned off by Christians or things the church has done, or stories that are complicated and hard to believe. I GET THAT, BUT...

IF YOU'RE GOING TO REJECT JESUS, then make sure it is over the right issue, such as the one that is the focus of today – the Resurrection. Don't be sidetracked by other issues, but go to that which is of first importance – Who is Jesus, what did he do, and did he really rise from the dead?

If you have honest questions, then we'll do all we can to give you honest answers. As for this morning it should be helpful as you'll get a glimpse of the benefits that come to those who know Jesus as Lord. Listen up because these benefits can apply to you as well, if you trust him by faith.

[1] Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. [2] And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

[3] His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. [4] And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. [5] But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

[6] He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. [7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."

[8] So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. [9] And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. (Matthew 28:1-9 ESV)

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees eternity.

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees security

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees stamina

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees eternity.

No matter how mundane, routine, and slowly progressing your story seems to be, it's marching towards a conclusion. The hope of Easter is that, for believers, there will be a moment when God will raise you out of this broken world into a paradise where sin and suffering will be no more – Jn 3:16 (1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 21:4).

When it comes to the Easter narrative, scripture is clear that **we are dealing with a Resurrection, not a Resuscitation.**

Jesus wasn't resuscitated from sleep or a coma or an unconscious state. No one came along and splashed him with a bucket of cold water to wake him up. There were no smelling salts under the nose to revive him.

There is no other valid way of explaining the changed lives of his disciples or of previous non-believers.

Saul of Tarsus is a great example and all the believers in the room are others.

One of the arguments used by those who deny the resurrection is to say that "some big event happened that changed the lives of the followers of Jesus, but it wasn't seen as a physical resurrection.

Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong

If some INCREDIBLE, but NON-miraculous event happened that was powerful enough to change the lives of these men and women, then why not simply go with that story? What was it?
Are we to believe that such an INCREDIBLE event happened but no one wrote it down and it didn't survive in oral history?

Why make up a resurrection if it wasn't needed?

Why the resurrection story? Because it was TRUE.

Despite efforts to stomp out the accounts of the resurrection, right after the events, and since then, we are still here today worshipping and singing about a man who lived 2000 years ago. He owned little, if anything. He never traveled far from his home town. He had no great family pedigree; his associates were a group of clueless and cowardly men who weren't very impressive.

BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED that turned them into a fearless group of men and women who were willing to stand up to the power elites of their own people and culture, as well as those of the greatest power on earth – the Roman Empire.

Nobody expected to see a risen body; because nobody expected to see NO BODY.

2. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees security.

No matter how unpredictable and out-of-control your life feels, Jesus is reigning, and he will continue to reign until the final enemy is under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). That doesn't mean you won't experience pain and hurt in this world, but it does mean there's nothing that Jesus does not know about, cannot intervene in, or alter altogether. And it means that God works all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to His purpose.

Jesus IS THE FIRST BORN FROM THE DEAD, i.e. there will be others

Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

3. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees stamina. 1 Cor 15:58

[56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:50-58 ESV)

No matter how hopeless and weak you think you are, you have been provided with all the grace you need to make it to the end.

Christian, because of these 3 resurrection guarantees, you can live with unusual stability and a life of repentant faith. You don't have to be tossed around by the unpredictable circumstances of daily life, because you have a predictable eternity coming. And, while you wait for Christ to return, you have the motivation and ability to make the godly choices in your life, regardless of what you're facing. That's a message that shouldn't be limited to just one Sunday a year!

If you're in the "I'm not sure about all this" camp, then I want to challenge you to compare YOUR ideas about what happened to the body of Jesus with the witness of the Bible, and the scholarship of 2000 years.

Is it possible that you're NOT in the "I don't know camp" because of an intellectual hang up?

Is there something else going on?

EX: "If I could answer all your questions would you then surrender your life to Christ?"

IF the answer is "NO", would that mean that it's not an intellectual issue at all; it's much more?

It's probably because you're in the "I still want to be the ruler of my own life" camp.

I GET IT. WE get it.

Every Christian knows how you feel. We've been there, and the dirty little secret is that there are far too many times when we slip back into that camp.

But the surpassing value of knowing Christ pulls us back.

Your real issue right now is that there is something or someone else who is in the place of God in your life - a person, a thing - things, a desire that rule your heart, a cause, a hunger for power or pleasure, etc.

You might think that following Jesus is too risky- some people may not understand, it will change your life, etc.

I'm here to tell you that **whatever you've replace God with is far riskier because it won't stand the test of the ultimate equalizer - DEATH.**

Too many people reject Jesus to preserve something they will lose in the end. People hang on to old arguments against God and never re-examine their own hearts in order to hang on to things that will fade away in the end.

Are you building your life on something that will stand in the face of death, the ultimate equalizer?

If not, why not?

You may have some good legitimate questions about religion or the church or Christians, but when it comes to the core of biblical faith,

**GOD DIDN'T SEND AN AIRTIGHT ARGUMENT.
HE SENT AN AIRTIGHT PERSON.**

Do you know Him?

Why not let this be your resurrection day? Ask God to give you a new heart, a new hope and eternal life.