

The Resurrection

Act 10:34-43 1Co 15:19-26 Joh 20:1-18

Have you thought about what you would say if you had to explain the Christian faith to someone?

What would be the most important things to mention.

Reading through Acts gives us a clue, because we have examples of the preaching from the very beginning of the church.

You will notice with each example, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is of utmost importance.

Jesus' disciple, Peter has been invited to speak to a group of non-Jews, Gentiles, at the home of a Roman Centurion called Cornelius.

If you ever wanted to know the central message of Christianity, here it is...

God shows no partiality,

Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;

but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear,

Jesus is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

(As he was speaking the Holy Spirit came upon them, as if to confirm the message, and that it was for all people)

If you have any doubts as to whether Jesus is the Son of God or not, look at the evidence for the resurrection.

+BI John Singleton Copley, one of the great legal minds in British history and three times High Chancellor of England, wrote, "I know pretty well what evidence is, and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet."

Peter was an eyewitness. He saw what Jesus did. He saw him transformed on the mountain. He was there at the empty tomb, and he saw Jesus alive and well on a few occasions after his resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection means that there will be a resurrection to judgement for everyone.

And on that day you need to have taken notice and acted upon that last sentence...

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

To believe in Jesus, is not merely to believe that he rose from the dead, but to actually entrust your life to him. To know about him, to believe he is the Son of God, to put your life in his hands and receive the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes at some length about the resurrection in 1 Cor 15. Some of those verses we read today...

He shows that without the resurrection we have no guarantees.

If Christ is still dead, then death has not been conquered, and we are wasting our time, living a lie.

Paul contrasts the sin of Adam which brought spiritual death into the world to the resurrection of Christ, which brought spiritual life.

Just as the Creation brought about perfect physical life.

So the resurrection ushers in spiritual/eternal life by which we will be made perfect again.

If we only had the crucifixion, but not the resurrection, we could be forgiven but there would be no life beyond death, no place with God.

+BI The Good Friday service in Dampara Baptist Church, Chittagong, Bangladesh, was packed. Little children sat on the floor in the aisles and across the front of the church. Rows of people stood in the back, craning their necks to see the crucifixion scene as depicted in the "Jesus Film."

Weeping and gasps of unbelief could be heard in the shocked hush as Jesus was crucified. As the Bengalis watched, they were feeling the agony of Jesus' pain and the disappointment of the disciples. In that emotional moment, one young boy in the crowded church suddenly cried out, "Do not be afraid. He gets up again! I saw it before."

A small boy's encouraging cry gave new hope to the viewers of the film. "He is risen!" is the cry that gives new hope to all.

William D. Barrick, Christian Reader, Vol. 35, no. 2.

But what does that mean to us now?

Well - It should change our whole perspective on death.
But it should also change our whole perspective on the way we live.

For Paul it was the great message of hope in the midst of all his struggles through life

For the African slaves working the cotton fields, it meant something better to look forward to.

To those who suffered persecution and deprivation because of their faith, it meant a reward in heaven.

For the lonely, the depressed, the severely handicapped, the mentally disabled, the carers whose lives are consumed by their caring,
...the resurrection is the reminder that this life is not the main thing.

To those who have lost a loved one, it is the message of reunion

For those who grapple with failure and addictions, it is the promise of power to overcome.

For the dying it is a message of joy and peace.

Malcom Muggeridge was a great thinker who came to faith later in life. I saw him interviewed by Parkinson and was impressed with his assurance and depth. He once wrote...

+BI Plenty of great teachers, mystics, martyrs and saints have spoken words full of grace and truth. In the case of Jesus alone, however, the belief has persisted that when he came into the world, God deigned to take on the likeness of a man in order that men might reach out.

For myself, as I approach my end, I find Jesus' outrageous claim ever more captivating and meaningful. Quite often, waking up in the night as the old do, I feel myself to be half out of my body, hovering between life and death, with eternity rising in the distance.

I see my ancient carcass, prone between the sheets, stained and worn like a scrap of paper dropped in the gutter and, hovering over it, myself, like a butterfly released from its chrysalis stage and ready to fly away. Are caterpillars told of their impending resurrection? How in dying they will be transformed from poor earth-crawlers into creatures of the air, with exquisitely painted wings? If told, do they believe it? I imagine the wise old caterpillars shaking their heads -- no, it can't be; it's a fantasy.

Yet in the limbo between living and dying, as the night clocks tick remorselessly on, and the black sky implacably shows not one single streak or scratch of gray, I hear those words: I am the resurrection, and the life, and feel myself to be carried along on a great tide of joy and peace.

⁵⁸*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord.*

your labour is not in vain and the resurrection proves it!