Why is Easter Such an Important Day?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

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 Good morning! Please open your Bibles to the First Epistle the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. This morning, we will be looking at chapter 15 verses 12-19. The title of the message is “Why is Easter Such an Important Day?” In our Sunday School class for the past couple of months we have been discussing the reasons why the resurrection of Christ is so important to not only Christians in the world, but why it is important for every man and woman who has lived or will ever live. To set the stage for our scripture today let us first take a walk through the events that have led us to this Easter morning.

 Beginning on Maundy Thursday Jesus and His disciples ate their last supper together in the upper room. As they ate that meal Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, explained to them that He had to go to the cross and then He instituted the Lord’s Supper. During this evening Jesus explained to His disciples that He came to this world to make the world know the Father and so that God would be reconciled with His creation through Christ’s atoning death on the cross. Even though the disciples did not yet understand, He used their last night together to prepare them for the horror that was about to take place. Later that evening Jesus was arrested and taken into custody after being betrayed by one of His own for 30 pieces of silver.

 On Good Friday Jesus was put on trial in the middle of the night by the Jewish authorities who did whatever they could to find Him guilty of blasphemy. After they issued their guilty verdict they took him to Governor Pilate who tried to have Him released because the charges were so flimsy. However, in order not to have a riot break out in the city Pilate allowed the people to choose which prisoner to release as was the Roman custom to do at Passover. The people chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. Then Jesus was flogged, crucified, and then was laid in a new tomb by a secret follower Joseph of Arimathea.

 On resurrection Sunday as the women were going to the tomb they found it to be empty and then they eventually saw the risen Lord who told them to tell the disciples. This resurrection changed the course of human history and has had an impact in the world that no other event in the history of mankind has ever had. As we begin to look at our Scripture today we will learn that there are six reasons why Easter is such an important day and why we all need to thank God for resurrecting Christ from the dead. Let’s read together 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. **“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? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain. Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.”**

 According to the writing of the Apostle Paul there are six reasons why the resurrection of Christ matters and why believing in this has eternal consequences for all people. Before I say anything regarding this Scripture I need to make this very clear. For someone to make the claim they are a Christian they must confirm a belief in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. To make the claim that you a Christian carries with it the necessity of believing in this historically accurate event. I am saddened to say that not all churches teach the resurrection of Christ as a real factual event in history. The Apostle Paul is telling us in this passage that rejecting the account of the resurrection not only makes someone not a Christian, but that attitude regarding this event carried with it an eternal consequence. Let us begin looking at the six reasons why Easter is such an important day for all people.

 The first reason that Easter is important is because if Christ never rose from the dead then the preaching you hear every week and all the preaching that has been done since the ascension of Christ has been done in vain. Earlier in this chapter Paul writes that the resurrection of Christ is a fundamental teaching of the Apostles and that it is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. In verses 3 and 4 he writes **“For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,.”** Paul is saying that the teaching of the resurrection was handed down to him from the eyewitnesses who saw all those things happen in their presence. He also makes the case that this is of first importance meaning that if this event did not take place then the entire faith is worthless. Therefore, all the preaching that is done regarding Jesus Christ being the only way to heaven and His sacrifice reconciling us with God, that preaching has been a waste of time and profits no one.

 The second reason why the resurrection matters is because if it never happened then our entire faith would be foolish. Why is this so? It would be very foolish to believe in a dead man as your Savior. If Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead then the belief that He is who He claimed to be is foolish. The Son of God, if that is who He really is, would not be able to be defeated by death. The very claim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is confirmed by His resurrection from the dead. As Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans **“who was declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (1:4).** When God raised Jesus from the dead He was confirming the claims Jesus made about Himself in His ministry.

 The third reason why the resurrection matters is because if Christ did not rise from the dead the disciples who claimed to have seen Him resurrected are all liars. This is one of the many objections we hear today from those who do not believe in the resurrection of Christ. The accusation is that the disciples made all of this up so that they could use it to have control or power over others. For this accusation to have any credibility we need to ask ourselves one simple question, what did the disciples get for claiming they had seen the resurrected Jesus? The only thing all of them received was persecution, not power or authority over anyone. All the Apostles, except for John, died as martyrs. Not only were they murdered for their faith, but their deaths were very painful and bloody. Several were crucified, some were burned at the stake and others were tortured. Even though John did not die the Romans attempted to poison him and then tried to boil him in a pot of hot oil. After both of those attempts could not kill him he was then sent to a prison island of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. Paul (1 Cor. 15:3-8) and the Apostle Peter (Luke 24:36-42) claim to have seen and touched the risen Christ. It is very unlikely that 12 men would die for claiming something false when that claim only got them persecution and death. They truly believed they had seen and touched the risen Jesus.

 Reason four is that if the resurrection of Christ did not happen then all people would still be lost in their sins. Jesus not being able to overcome the grave would mean that sin has won and that it will never be defeated. The message of the gospel is that all have sinned and need salvation (Romans 3:23). All people are sinners at their birth by inheriting the sin nature of Adam, because of sin and because God is holy He must deal with sin by judging all sinners as guilty of rebellion against Him. However, because God is gracious and desiring that no one be separated from Him for eternity, He sent Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins that we cannot pay due to our sinful nature. When Jesus dies on the cross the penalty for sin had been paid, then His resurrection proves that He has overcome sin and death. If Christ never rose then sin won the battle, and we are still lost in our sins. Thank the Lord He has triumphed over the grave!

 If Christ has not resurrected from the dead then death would still have the final word on all our lives. What this means is that after death there would be nothing else to look forward to because death would be the end of it all. As we travel through this life we experience the thrill of youth but as we age we begin to experience that our bodies cannot do the same things they could when we were younger. Eventually the physical aspect of our lives will wear out and we will be in the presence of the Lord. What kind of existence would it be to just live this life only to look forward to getting old, experiencing pain, and then dying only to become food for worms? The Apostle Paul writes later in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians “**Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (55-56).** Without the resurrection of Christ death would be the end. We can face death with peace and assurance that our Lord is waiting for us to join Him in His presence. Since Christ has overcome death, we will do the same just as Him in our own resurrection.

 Our sixth and last reason according to Scripture why the resurrection matters is because if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, we would only have to fear the future, not look forward to it. Have you ever noticed that those who live without the hope of Christ in their lives look for other things to bring them security in their lives? Sorcery such as fortune-telling and palm reading become the source for wisdom rather than the God who has created all things. We do not have to worry about the future because we already know who holds the keys to the future. There is an old hymn that includes these words which bring us the comfort we need when we think about the uncertainty of the future in this world: “I don’t know what holds tomorrow, but I know who holds my hand.” Those who trust in Christ can face the future with assurance in the promises that God has made in His Word. Jesus resurrecting from the dead shows that God is still in control and that everything Jesus taught is both true and trustworthy.

 In conclusion, let us take a moment to once again review six reasons provided by the Apostle Paul why the resurrection of Christ is so important to all people. If Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead our preaching would be of no worth, our faith would be foolish, the disciples would be liars, sin would still be in control of us, death would still reign supreme, and we would have to fear the future. The resurrection of Christ is the event that has forever changed the world. Over the past two and a half millennia the gospel message has been proclaimed all over the world. Those who have come before us have laid this foundation for us. This message changes lives and is the only good news that results in the eternal salvation for all who accept it. This Easter let us make it our number one priority to live in appreciation for what God has done for us and let us not hesitate to share this with a world that desperately needs Jesus. The argumentation the Apostle Paul used with his readers in Corinth give us the rational ammunition to share this good news with hope, confidence, and clarity. The resurrection of Christ gives each life meaning and value. Every day live in the blessed assurance that you serve a God who not only rules the universe but loves you as His own and has shown this love in paying the penalty for your sins and also defeating sin through the conquering of death.