

Easter 2021 | David Baumgartner

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Well, good morning, everyone, and happy Resurrection Sunday to all of you.

God is good. And all the time he is. I sure love this time of year. Spring has finally come. Don't you just feel it in the air?

You know, flowers are in bloom. I got to hear the birds sing this morning. And you got that lingering smell of sausage and bacon in the air. That's great. Thanks, Ed. Thanks, Mark, for all that you do there.

But this is a very special morning, and that's because we're joining millions and millions of people around the world to celebrate what I'm going to call the greatest event in human history, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's the day that he conquered death. In the Bible, we read about those who were brought back to life from the dead. You may be familiar with some of these stories.

[1:08] Like in Luke chapter 7, there's the widow's son. And you have Luke 8, Jairus' daughter. In John 11, you have Lazarus. How about in Acts chapter 8, a young girl named Tabitha?

Tabitha. Acts 20, Eutychus. And then we read about various saints who came to life when Jesus died, and that's found in Matthew 27.

But here's the thing. All of those individuals eventually went on to die, but not Jesus. His resurrection was forever, never to die again.

And not only that, when Jesus rose from the dead, he received a glorified body. He was given a place of honor, seated at the right hand of God the Father in glory and in authority.

And I think the best news for us this morning is that because of his resurrection, you and I can have a personal relationship with God himself. Most of you know that we're going through the book of Romans on Sundays.

[2:13] And so last week, our brother Tom here focused on just the blessings that you and I enjoy from having a right standing with Almighty God.

Last week, Tom focused on those blessings. And I'll tell you what, it reminded me of my younger days when I used to climb mountains. And you would climb all day.

You'd be working and toiling at it. But you get at the top. And you'd be at the summit. And what do you do? Do you scamper back down right away? No, you stay there.

You take it all in. And you just rest. And you have just this pause. Taking in all the goodness that God has brought us. The same thing for those of us who are in Christ.

There's a verse last week that we share out of Romans chapter 4. If you have your handout, look with me there. It says, blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

[3:12] Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. What a blessing it is to be able to think about those thoughts. This morning, I'd like to challenge all of us to consider, what if the resurrection of Jesus never happened?

Just think about the implications of this. Where would you and I be this morning? Well, actually, the apostle Paul asks and answers that very question.

If you have your Bibles, I'd welcome you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Or you can look on the flip side of your handout. The verses are there. We're looking at verses 12 to 20 of

chapter 15.

Why did Paul write this portion here? Well, he wrote this section in response to some of the false information that was infiltrating the church at the city of Corinth.

Some were actually denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Let's go ahead and look at our text. 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 12. He says, He says,

[5:18] Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can come here today.

We can enjoy the sunshine. We can enjoy the good food that we were able to have. We're able to enjoy each other's company, the fellowship that we have. But most of all, Lord, you have made this day special because we are celebrating the day Jesus conquered death.

And we thank you for that, Lord. We ask that through these words that were given to us through your Holy Spirit, that we would see that they would come to life for us this morning. That we would see things that we haven't seen before.

That we would be delighted as we seek to delight you in all of our ways. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Let's go ahead and get right into our text here, starting in verse 12.

Notice here in verses 12 and 13, Paul asks this question. If Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some of you say that there's no resurrection of the dead?

[6:27] But really, where did that idea come from? Well, it was embedded in the Greek culture that was going on in Corinth. Greek philosophers like Plato, they viewed the mind and the soul as being the highest parts of the human person.

But in contrast to that, they viewed the human body as being inherently bad, as being inherently decrepit, weak. I mean, eventually, what happens to our bodies?

Well, we get old. We begin to leak. Our bodies, when it dies, our bodies stink. They decay. And so some of them, to them, the idea that there's a bodily resurrection, that was laughable.

Why would anyone want to spend eternity in a decrepit body, a prison, if you will, of such a body?

And so as it follows, in verse 13, he says, if there's no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.

And so then Paul launches into this series of progressive arguments. You might think of these as five disastrous results if Jesus had not risen from the dead.

[7:49] Let's go through this passage here. First of all, notice verse 14. If Christ has not been raised, he says, then our preaching is in vain. That word for preaching here is not referring to the act of preaching like I'm doing now.

It's talking about the content of what's being said. And so if Christ has not been raised, Paul's words, Paul's teachings, they're worthless.

And he should have remained a Pharisee instead of wasting his time and his life on unfounded claims. We're wasting our time as well this morning looking at this text.

Instead, we could be talking about who's wearing the prettiest Easter bonk this morning. Well, we could be talking about the mystery of how bunnies lay eggs.

Boy, that's some vain preaching, isn't it? Now, the main point here is that Paul could be charged with a very serious crime against all of humanity, with all the fake news that he spread across the world starting in the first century.

[9:03] But not only Paul. Look with me, verse 15. He says, we are even found to be misrepresenting God.

Well, who else does that involve? Well, he talks about the apostles, Cephas. He talks about James. All of them would be liars. And here's the thing.

The main requirement to be an apostle is to have seen the risen Lord. Well, if that's so, they're all liars. And now we have another major problem.

And that's because many of these men were responsible for writing the New Testament that we read and study and treasure every week. Our Bibles would be nothing more than storybooks. Fiction, if you will. They would be filled with words that were never said. They would be filled with claims that had never really happened. Let me give you an example.

[10:03] In Matthew's gospel account alone, we're told that there's on three separate occasions, Jesus told his disciples, I will be put to death, but after that, I will rise again.

Well, if there's no resurrection, that would be false. Somebody's lying. Either Paul or Jesus himself. Paul's preaching would be in vain.

Secondly, look with me, verse 14. He says, if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is in vain. If you look in verse 17, he adds, your faith would be futile.

Vain. What does that mean? He's talking here about being empty. Being worthless. Something that's having no value. And friends, that would affect the whole Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation began with Martin Luther repeating the words in Romans chapter 1, verse 17. The just shall what? Live by faith.

[11:09] Well, not so fast, Marty. If Christ did not raise from the dead, was not raised from the dead, there's no use in believing in him.

How about thirdly? Notice, if Christ has not been raised, verse 17, you're still in your sins. In other words, there's no forgiveness from God.

Boy, sin is a pretty unpopular word today, isn't it? It is. What is it? In the Bible, sin is described in a variety of ways.

You may think of it as error, missing the mark, transgression, iniquity, injustice, rebellion, wickedness.

You can put all those words, all those concepts in a big box. And there are offenses that what? They separate us from a holy God. Sin causes a condition called guilt.

[12:10] And guilt requires justice. Guess what? God loves justice, which is why he sent Jesus to die on the cross, to receive the punishment for our sins.

But here's the thing. Here's the argument. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, how could we ever say that the Father accepted what Jesus did? How could we say it?

Well, we couldn't. And that would be tragic. Our lives right now, it would be like no life at all. You might compare it to living on death row, awaiting the penalty phase to begin.

How about fourthly, look in verse 18. Those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. In other words, nobody is in heaven.

To fall asleep here, that means to just physically die. That's what that means. To perish is a word that describes a condition of being separated from God.

[13:19] Very simple here. So, here's the point. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all the believers who died in the past, they went to their graves in a state of deception.

Somebody lied to them. They believed a lie. And they remained deceived their whole lives. Think about it. Even worse. Some of them became martyrs because of that lie.

All the Bible heroes that we read and talk about in Sunday school, they would not be in heaven right now. They'd be in hell. Peter, James, John, so too all of the saints.

They laid on their deathbeds filled with the hope of seeing the risen Jesus, only to awaken to just total darkness.

Separation. There's a Greek word for that. It's a bummer. What a bummer. How about verse 19, the fifth one here? He says, if only for this life we hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[14:33] I'll give you another way to say that. The joke is on us. It's on us. So, in other words, all of us who have put our hopes on Christ, on his power, his promises, we're to be pitied in this life.

If I'm speaking to some of you, perhaps you've fought all your life against temptation. Perhaps you've struggled against sin. You've lived your lives to please the Lord.

Well, for what? Maybe you have even suffered reproach for his name. For what? You know, the mockers would have been right.

Five considerations here. If Jesus was not risen from the dead, I think that we could say that we would be very miserable. Have you ever had a nightmare?

A really bad one? And then you awaken and you find to your relief that it was just a nightmare. Isn't it great when you realize that?

[15:45] Verse 20 in our text is that awakening. Look with me here. Paul goes on in verse 20. He says, but. There's another one of those buts.

But God. But in fact, he says, Christ has been raised from the dead. That's the perfect tense in the Greek language here. He says, the first fruits.

Speaking of Christ. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. In other words, there's more to follow. More to follow Jesus. This morning, I would like to just restate these five things in a positive light.

Because really what I want to do today is lift up the name of Jesus. And just to show just how awesome he is. And how thankful that you and I can be on this resurrection Sunday.

Tom, maybe we'll all be on that mountaintop again. You know, just worshiping the Lord for who he is. I'm calling this the gifts of the resurrection.

[16:46] Amen. The gifts. Let's go through these. And please follow along with me on your handouts here. And I'm going to change the order a little bit here. So that we can see a pattern of God's goodness.

Number one. Instead of saying, as in verse 17, you're still in your sins. Because of the resurrection, we can be forgiven of our sins.

Now, I put this first. Because if God still holds our sins against us. And believe me, we all sin. We do. We all sin.

But if he still holds our sins against us. There's no hope of receiving anything else from God. Except the wrath that we deserve. Everything.

Everything. Hangs on forgiveness. It's the foundation for every blessing that you and I enjoy in Christ. That he won't hold our sins against us.

[17:54] I think it boils down to this. Why would a holy and perfect deity invite an unholy sinner like myself into his presence?

To receive my worship? To perhaps hear my petitions? Why would he ultimately invite me into heaven with him?

If he holds my sins against me? I think this applies to all of you too. Well, here's the answer. It's because in Christ, our sins have been dealt with.

Jesus paid the debt of our sin by bearing the wrath that you and I deserve. And his resurrection from the dead proved this.

The father raised Jesus from the dead to show that he accepted Jesus' sacrifice. We're going to see that next week in Romans 4.

[18:53] So the father accepted his sacrifice. And through faith in Jesus, all those who believe are justified. That's another way of saying we are declared righteous in God's court of law.

And the significance of this, friends, it's staggering. It really is. Eternal life begins at the moment of faith.

How simple it is. In John chapter 5, listen to these words. Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has, he already has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

What precious words those are. He won't hold our sins against us. Here's a second gift. It's from verses 14 and 17.

Instead of having a faith that's futile, we can say that because Jesus rose from the dead, our faith is well-founded.

[20:06] When was the last time you were commended for believing in Christ? Probably not too much. I'm glad you came to hear that. What does that mean to have a well-founded faith?

It means that your faith is warranted. It's certifiable. And this is because of the object of our faith. The object of our faith is in God who cannot lie.

Last week's verse, it says, for what does scripture say? Talking about Abraham. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Righteousness. Righteousness. Simple faith. And yet how profound it is. Can a person's faith be worthless?

Yeah, it can. You may have heard some people say, well, it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe in something. Friends, that's not only an error, that's dangerous.

[21:11] Suppose you're about to drive your car over a bridge. And if you believe that that bridge is going to hold you up, what are you going to do?

You're going to go on. You're going to proceed. Well, if that bridge happened to be I-35 West in Minneapolis on August 1st, 2007, that would have been a bad choice because it collapsed. That bridge collapsed and it killed 13 people and it injured 145. Did you know that that's an eight-lane steel bridge?

And most people that day, they believed that it would hold them up. It actually was just a design flaw. The trust, the gusset plates that hold pieces together were too weak.

So here's a question. What, to whom or to what do we place our faith in? Who is the object of our faith? Are you counting on your good deeds?

[22:18] Are you counting on maybe the fact that your parents or your grandparents were believers? Friends, that's an error and that's dangerous.

Can that hold you up? Can that hold you up? Will the father accept it? No. But in Christ, our faith is well-founded.

And that's because he's the object of our faith. Jesus did what he said that he would do. He rose from the dead. And so because of the resurrection, we can be forgiven.

And secondly, our faith is well-founded. Thirdly, instead of saying that Paul and the other apostles are a bunch of liars, we can say this.

Because Jesus rose from the dead. What the apostles taught is true. What we find in God's word is accurate and holy.

[23:22] They're not false witnesses. They proclaimed the truth. Did you know that 11 out of the 12 apostles died a martyr's death?

The only one who didn't was John. He lived to be in an old age. But guess what? They boiled him in oil. And there were lots of other people that similar things happened.

To me, I think it's very hard to understand why so many people would be willing to die for something if it was just made up. If they were just stories.

If it was just fiction. Now, if you want to know who teaches lies, I'll tell you who does. Who teaches false information?

It's in the world right now. Right now, there's a systematic indoctrination taking place in almost every sphere of life.

[24:19] I'm talking about academics. I'm talking about science. I'm talking about the arts. I'm talking about politics. Those, everything that's contrary to God's word.

And the more you read God's word, the more those things will just stick out. Like, like blaring signals. Their teaching is so false that people have to be forced to go along with it.

Under the threat of being canceled. I'm talking about being discredited. I'm talking about losing your jobs. I'm talking about being eliminated. Let me give you an example.

How many scientists, true scientists, would be willing to come out against evolution, but they can't. And that's because they'll lose their jobs.

And there's so many other issues just like that. Friends, truth is not established by a popular vote.

[25:21] Truth is not established by the wealthy nor the powerful people of the world. What the apostles wrote is true because their writings, what we read in this book, were inspired by the Holy Spirit himself.

There's at least 15 incidences recorded in the Bible of what Jesus did after he came back to life.

Earlier in this chapter, if you have your Bibles, you can look with me at beginning in verse four.

But it's on your handout. Speaking of Jesus, Paul says he was buried. He was raised on the third day, according to scriptures. And he appeared to Cephas. That's Peter.

And then to the 12. After that, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time. Most of whom remain until now, though some have fallen asleep.

And then he appeared to James and then all the apostles. And then he says, last of all. In other words, Paul is the last apostle with a capital A. He appeared to last of all, as if it were to one untimely born.

[26:29] He appeared to me, he says. So Jesus appeared to all of these people, and it's documented. And there's not enough time for that to become a fable.

No. Jesus' resurrection is a matter of public record. It wasn't something we're told in elsewhere. It wasn't something done in secret. No.

The whole city knew about it. Eventually, the whole Roman Empire knew about it. Eventually, Webster Groves, St. Louis knows about it.

And it changed history, friends. Amen. How about the fourth gift? Instead of deserving pity, we can say that because Jesus rose from the dead, Christians should be envied.

Envied. We serve the king of kings, friends. We live for a noble cause. Even when the unbelieving world threatens to cancel you, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4.17, look with me.

[27:45] It's on your handout. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Wow.

These are truths. Did you know that 76% of the world's population, we have 7.9 billion people on the planet right now, claim to belong to either one of four major religions?

I'm talking about Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Well, the founders of all of these four religions have something in common.

Guess what it is? They all died. They did. Abraham, we're told that he died around 2000 BC, and he was buried in Hebron.

How about Buddha? He died in the 5th or the 6th century BC. Tradition says that he was 80 years old when he died, and his body was cremated.

[28:48] Muhammad, he died on June 8th, 632 AD, and his body was buried in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Millions of people go to visit his grave every year.

That's called the pilgrimage to Mecca. Jesus died in the year 33 AD. He was buried in a borrowed tomb just outside of Jerusalem.

Point is, all of them died, but Christianity is unique because Jesus is the only one who rose from the dead.

How precious that is. And friends, he's alive today. Here, let's look at this last gift. Instead of saying that believers who've died have slipped into nothingness, maybe separation, we can say that because Jesus rose from the dead, those who've died as believers have not perished.

Rather, they live forever, enjoying all of the heavenly blessings that God has in store for them. What a great promise that is.

[30:00] I want to ask you, how many people that you know come to the end of their lives and they just say, boy, my life has been, is empty. My life has been worthless.

My life's been meaningless. Well, friends, here's something to look forward to. It's in the book of Daniel. And look at what Daniel says. Look with me in your handout.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake. These to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of the heaven. And those who lead the many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

What a great thing to know the Lord. What a great thing, a greater thing to lead others to faith in Christ. What a promise that is.

[31:06] And it's all because of Jesus. We can celebrate him. If I could ask the musicians to come up. Each year, yeah, you guys.

Each year, skeptics come out of the woodwork with false claims about Jesus. Have you noticed that nobody ever tries to discredit Buddha? Nobody ever tries to discredit Mohammed?

It's only Jesus or Jesus's followers. This morning, you and I can consider all of these great things that God's given us.

Forgiveness, reasons to believe. He's given us the truth that we can know. He's given us an enviable life because you and I are objects of God's care.

And he's given us a secure future. A noble cause in which to live right now and glories later. But if the gospel's not true and if Jesus did not rise again, there's no hope.

[32:13] There's no hope. We are in big trouble. Our singing, our celebration is for nothing. What the children just did before us, by the way, they did a great job.

What the children did before us was just a big waste of time. And so, but friends, that's not the case. You and I can take comfort as Paul said in verse 20, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. And I just want to ask you this. What kind of God is he? Just what sort of God would send his son to come into this world to be treated like he was, lay down his life for us?

What kind of God is that? This morning, we have a chance to remember our Lord. How precious that is. While on earth, Jesus gave us two ordinances, water baptism, and he also gave us the Lord's Supper.

And so, we can, if I can ask our ushers to go ahead and distribute the, we're not that formal here, guys. I think you can tell, can't you?

[33:31] To ask the ushers to distribute the emblems. I would like to read from this same book that Paul wrote.

This is found in chapter 11. Go ahead. Listen to what I said, what Paul says.

I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread and he said, so we have these emblems here.

These are nothing magical. These are not magic pills or anything like that. It's just little emblems that resemble bread. But it's to remind us that Jesus said, and when he gave thanks, he broke it. So these are already broken. And he said these words, this is my body, which is for you. Do this. In other words, take it.

[34:43] Consume it. Do this in remembrance of me. We'll go ahead and pause here and think about what the Lord Jesus did for your standing, for your place before God the Father.

there's a saying that all roads lead to God. Well, rather than argue with that, here's another question.

What kind of God is he going to be there when you get there? Is he going to be your friend or your judge? We have these emblems that serve as a reminder.

do this?

as the cup is being distributed Jesus went on after he broke the bread and gave the bread to those at the Lord's Supper he said in the same way it says that he took the cup also after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me and then Paul adds these words for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes how precious it is to remember the Lord Jesus because my friends if it wasn't for Jesus we would have no reason to be at here be here at all today but we do have reason because Jesus rose from the dead

[37:03] Lord in this holy moment we contemplate just the awesomeness of what took place Lord some 2,000 years ago Lord how we thirst for truth how we delight in the words that assure us that you love us you're not against us you have made a way that we can be reconciled to you no matter what we've done no matter who we are no matter how our shortcomings have manifested themselves in this life you have made a way and it just begins with that Lord because your blessings continue more and more and we're so grateful for that Amen I don't know why you came here this morning

I think all of us came here for different reasons maybe it was just out of tradition because what do you do it's Easter you go to church maybe it was to hear the children sing maybe it was to eat the fine cuisine of Mark and Ed maybe it was just to you know listen to a middle-aged old man talk for a little bit but regardless of why you're here I don't think it's an accident it's not lift up your hearts and sing with all the angels lift them up sing on the mountaintops sing there because in Christ alone our hope is found he is my life my strength my songÜ Gerry

The End