

Easter 2018 | 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, greetings everyone.

Happy Resurrection Day. Looks like the rain has stopped. Just in time for it to begin to snow, leader. Want to thank Ed and Mark again for a delicious breakfast.

What a treat. What's that again? A lot of other people.

Okay, Rob. Thank you all. Really appreciate it. Just to give you an update on our brother Bud. I just heard a report that Bud is responsive.

And he's answering questions. He is on his way to St. Clair Hospital. So please, we'll pray for him again shortly. But keep him in your prayers as well.

[1:05] Just throughout the week. And not only Bud, but also his family. So anyway, here we are. It's just in time for us to join the millions of people all over the world today.

Who are celebrating the greatest event that ever took place in all of human history. What am I talking about? The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This morning, we're going to be looking at a Bible passage that focuses on Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And also, why it's important. So if you have your Bibles, or if you want to, you can turn over the handout.

And please, let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 1 to 20. Look at that text with me. Paul wrote this section in response to some false information that was being infiltrating the church at Corinth.

Some of them were denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you look with me on the handout there, verse 12, Paul asks this question.

[2:14] 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?

That's a good question. From where did that idea come? Well, it didn't come from Paul. It sure didn't. The idea was actually embedded in the Greek culture.

Just a little background here. Greek philosophers, like Plato, for instance, considered the person's mind and soul to be the highest part of each individual.

And they believed that the soul would actually live on forever. In contrast, a person's physical body was seen as inherently bad, inherently decrepit.

And this makes sense. Our bodies get old, right? They do. We see it every day. And eventually they begin to just wear on and on until we face that time where we end up dying.

[3:16] And people have, you know, experienced this. The Greeks viewed the body as a type of prison. And death would release a person's soul from that prison.

And so to them, this whole idea of a bodily resurrection, it's laughable to them. And that's because why would anyone want to spend eternity in a prison of an old, decrepit body?

Well, here's the thing. What the Greek philosophers failed to realize is that when Jesus came back from the dead, he had a new, glorified body.

And this makes all the difference in the world. Let's go ahead and read our passage this morning. 1 Corinthians 15.

And I'm going to begin in verse 1. Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which you also are saved, if you hold fast to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

[4:31] For I delivered 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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

After that, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

At last of all, as it were, to one untimely born, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. 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?

[5:51] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is also in vain.

Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

But if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins, and then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

And if we hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

Heavenly Father, we come to you on this glorious day. We come to you thanking you for, and recognizing who you are, and what you have done for us.

[7:06] Lord, what a special day this is, that we can be in accord with millions of those who are worshiping you at this very moment, recognizing that you sent your son to pay the price for our sins.

Lord, we're reminded just of our weaknesses. We are reminded of just how frail the body is. As we lift up our brother Bud to you, Lord, even now, we ask that you would touch him with your healing hand, that you'd be with Mark as he accompanies his father.

We're not only reminded of the frailties of our human condition, but we're reminded of our sins. And even there, Lord, you came through for us.

We ask, Father, that you would open our eyes this morning, and that we would see marvelous things, things that we do not know. We ask for these graces. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

When I think about the ancient Greek philosophers, one of the things that I believe that you'll agree with me, at least they believed in the immortality of the soul.

[8:20] I want to ask you, what about today? Have we advanced in our knowledge? Have we gotten more in tune or more in line with what God says?

I would say we haven't. No, I would say that today, many people even deny the notion of life after death, and especially a bodily resurrection.

And that's because science has become dominant in our culture. If something can't be proven scientifically, then it doesn't matter. You can't say it.

I'd like to introduce you to such a man. Who would say that? If this works. Anybody know who this is?

That's Stephen Hawking. He's a very respectable figure in our society. He's a British professor of mathematics, physics, and cosmology. He died just recently, two and a half weeks ago, at the age of 76.

[9:32] I would say he's most well known for his battle with a neuromuscular disease that he had since age 21. Did you know that this gentleman has 13 honorary degrees?

He has numerous awards, medals, and prizes. He wrote 15 books. It's amazing. One of those books is called *The Grand Design*, which might have been his last one, released in 2010.

And I don't want to say anything derogatory about this man. You know, what a wonderful genius he was, probably on the order of Albert Einstein.

But one of the things that we can say about Stephen Hawking is that for the majority of his life, he was an atheist. To him, he said that eternal life is a fairy tale.

And in his book that was about a grand design, if you read in totality, there is no grand design, according to him.

[10:36] His ashes, now that he's been cremated, are buried in Cambridge, England, next, and this was his request, next to Charles Darwin.

So, you know, I personally believe that science is good. I do. Here's the thing, though. Science has its limits.

It does. The laws of science have no authority in the spiritual realm. And that's why the resurrection is called a miracle.

It is a miracle. Let's take a look at what Paul says about the resurrection of Jesus. There's really three truths that he begins with here. It's concerning the gospel in which we stand.

The first truth is this, and I'd like you to follow along on the handout. Verse 3. Very simple. Christ died. Jesus' death was real.

[11:40] He was crucified in a most painful way to die. Jesus was executed in public at a highly visible location in Jerusalem.

And the Romans wanted it this way because they wanted to send the message, don't mess with us. That's what it said. But just to make sure that he was dead, the historical record, the Bible tells us that one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

But I want to ask you this question. Why did Jesus die? Paul says, if you look in verse 3, it's for our sins. Now he goes on here in verse 3.

Notice he says, according to scripture. You might want to ask, what scriptures is he referring? Well, there's many scriptures, but here's one that was written, get this, 700 years before Christ walked this earth.

Look with me here. Speaking of the Messiah, the prophet Isaiah says that he was pierced for our transgressions.

[12:55] He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Well, we're all sinners, right? The prophet says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one of us, to our own way.

And the Lord has laid on him, Messiah, the iniquity of us all. From this passage here, 700 years before Christ walked this earth, we learn that Jesus died for a specific purpose.

He said it. It's for our iniquities. On that Friday afternoon, about 3 p.m., God the Son cried out, it is finished.

People heard that. You might want to ask, was it? Was his ordeal, was his sacrifice finished?

[13:58] I'm sure to many, it seemed like he was finished. Not what he was there to do. Perhaps we can imagine all of heaven pausing, gasping, in wonder, will God the Father agree with God the Son?

The second truth here that Paul points out, verse 4, speaking of Jesus, he was buried. All four gospel accounts tell us of Jesus' burial and how later that Friday afternoon, before sunset, Jesus' body was taken down from that cross by these two men, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and they placed Jesus' body in a tomb.

It's in John 19. The tomb was sealed and it was guarded by these Roman soldiers as instructed by Pontius Pilate. That's in Matthew 27.

All of this is documented in the record. But Paul goes on, here's the third truth. Verse 4, he was raised on the third day.

Amen. Amen. Early that Sunday morning, we get the answer loud and clear. Yes, the Father agreed with the Son.

[15:27] What a wonderful thing that is. He agreed. Yes, it is finished. His sacrifice that Jesus made was accepted by the Father.

He goes, Paul says, Jesus was raised. That's the perfect tense, friends, that describes an event. With continuing results into the present.

And in verse 4, notice again, we see this, according to the scripture. Now, what scriptures? Well, if you look with me again in Isaiah, verse 53.

Out of the anguish of his soul, he, this is speaking of God the Father, shall see. He shall see it and be satisfied.

What a wonderful truth. And then, as the Father says, by his knowledge, shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

[16:28] And he shall bear their iniquities. Someone had to bear the penalty for humanity's sin. someone had to bear the penalty for my sin.

And 700 years later, after the prophet Isaiah wrote this, Jesus did it. His sacrifice made many to be accounted as righteous.

Who are they? Well, all those who are willing to receive it by faith. Very simple. And hopefully, that's each person that's here today.

Consider the offer, my friends. Every sinful thought, every sinful word and deed that you've ever done or that you ever will do has been paid in full.

What a wonderful truth that is. If you haven't already placed your trust in Jesus, please do it. Please do it today. The resurrection of Jesus proved that the Father accepted Jesus' sacrifice as full payment for our debt.

[17:39] It also proved that Jesus is who he said that he is. And we could end right here this morning, friends, but we would miss Paul's main point here in this section because when Jesus rose from the grave, he had a new glorified body.

How do we know this? Well, look, Paul goes on here in verse 5. Jesus appeared to many. Did you know that in all of the accounts here, there's 14 different post-resurrection appearances recorded in the New Testament?

Jesus appeared to individuals. He appeared to large crowds. He appeared to men. He appeared to women. He appeared in public. He appeared in private.

He appeared in different times of the day. Now, some aspects of his appearance we understand, we can relate to. For instance, the record tells us that he could be touched.

The record tells us that he could eat food. But there's other aspects that I don't think we really quite understand. For instance, he could appear and then disappear.

[18:55] Or it's as if he's no longer bound by the laws of this universe. In our passage here, Paul mentions six of these appearances.

Notice here verse 5. He goes on. He appeared to, notice, Cephas, that's Peter. And then he appeared to the 12. Verse 6, after that, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time. Paul adds this, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. I think it's as though Paul here is inviting the Corinthians. If you don't believe me, go ahead and check out these 500 that are still alive.

Go ask them yourselves. Now, here's the thing. A critic, could say at this point, well, all of these people, they're followers of Jesus. And they'll say anything, right?

Yeah, they'll say anything. Well, these next two names that Paul gives us, they're very important.

And that's because of this. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, they were not followers of Jesus.

[20:06] Now, to whom am I referring? Well, first, here's the first great critic. He says in verse seven, then he appeared to James. Now, this James, he is the half-brother of Jesus.

And he's mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. But here's the key. Before Jesus' resurrection, James was an unbeliever.

He was. But after Jesus' resurrection, resurrection, Jesus appeared to James, and James came to believe. And later on, he became a prominent member, or leader, in the New Testament church.

Here's the second great critic, Paul himself. He's a critic. He says in verse eight, last of all, as it were, to one untimely born, speaking of Jesus, he appeared to me also.

You see, at one time, Saul, by this time, he was not only an unbeliever, he actually persecuted the church. And he was thoroughly convinced that Jesus was a phony.

[21:22] And so he dedicated his whole life to stamp out this new heresy, this new cult. And it was called the way at that time. But one day, while on the Damascus road, Saul had an encounter with Jesus.

And this is why he says in verse nine that his entry into the apostolic office was not like the other apostles. He says it was, verse eight, untimely.

Now here he is. He's writing to the Corinthians. And we get to read it too. Of these three foundational truths that are at the heart of the gospel.

Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Friends, this is the core of the gospel message that was preached.

And Paul adds in verse 11, whether it was I or whether it was the apostles or they, so we preach, so we believe, so you believe.

[22:27] And therein, we stand in those wonderful truths. Paul's not finished yet. He launches out with these six points here, just to show how bad it would be for us if Christ hasn't been raised.

Let me go through these quickly here. First, notice verse 14. Our preaching is in vain. That word for preaching here, it refers not to the act of preaching, but actually the content itself.

Our preaching, the content, is in vain. In other words, saying a lot of things that have no value to anyone. And if this were the case, I think that Jesus would be just like all the other religious leaders throughout history.

You know what I mean? Religious leaders who have a lot of nice things to say, and you can put their sayings up on a plaque on the wall, but it really means nothing.

They're just sayings. 65% of the world's population, right now, there's 7.6 billion people on this earth. But 65% of them claim to belong to either one of four major religions.

[23:48] I'm talking about Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. Now, the founders of these four religions, they all have something in common.

What is it? Well, the religious leaders died. All four of them died. Abraham died around the year 2000 B.C. He's buried in Hebron.

Buddha died in the 5th or 6th century B.C. Tradition says that he was 80 years old. when he died and his body was cremated. Muhammad died on June 8th, 632 A.D.

And his body's buried in Medina, Saudi Arabia. And millions of people come to visit his grave every year while they're on their pilgrimage to the Mecca.

Jesus died in the year 33 A.D. and he was buried in a borrowed tomb just outside of Jerusalem. All of them died.

[24:50] That's the point. But Christianity is unique. Only Jesus rose from the grave. What a great truth that is. Secondly, if Christ has not been raised, verse 14 goes on, your faith is also in vain.

Or verse 17, he says, your faith is worthless. I want to ask you, how can a person's faith be worthless? You know, many people think that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe in something.

Have you ever heard that before? Yeah. I'll tell you, friends, that is very wrong and it's actually very dangerous because it does matter. Here's the key.

Here's the key. What or who is the object of your faith? It matters. Can that object hold you up when you need it?

Can that object deliver on what it promises to do? You know, another event that happened about two and a half weeks ago was this pedestrian bridge at the International Varsity, I'm sorry, International University in Miami, Florida.

[26:07] It collapsed. A brand new bridge. Think about that. New steel, new concrete. I'm sure it looked really good. I'm sure people said, man, this thing's going to hold me up.

It's brand new. It didn't. You can believe sincerely that it will hold you up and you'll be sincerely wrong.

The object of our faith is Jesus Christ and what he accomplished. He died, he was buried, and he rose again. Third, if Christ has not been raised, there's no good news.

No good news. He came here and ate a nice breakfast this morning. That's it. No good news. He says in verse 15, moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God.

That word found here, that's actually a legal word for discovering the truth about something. Let me give you an example. There's a special council that's been established to discover the truth about President Trump's alleged collusion with the Russians.

[27:26] Well, in Paul's case, he would be charged with a crime against all of humanity. It would be a very serious crime. Paul would have a really special council established or appointed.

I mean, consider all the fake news that has been promulgated all across the first century, across the world. Not only Paul, though, look in verse 15.

We are even found to be false witnesses. Well, now we learn there's a conspiracy. Boy, who else is involved in this?

Well, look, the apostles, Cephas, James. How about those 500 people, all of them spreading fake news since the first century?

How about the Old Testament writers? How about the prophets? How about the Bible itself? The Bible, the best-selling book.

[28:29] It's all fake news. All of them false witnesses? No. No. Most of them, the writers of the Bible, lost their lives because of their faith.

Let me go on. Fourthly, if Christ has not been raised, there's no forgiveness. He says in verse 17, you're still in your sins. And if this were the case, friends, I think that this life could be compared to death row.

Do you know what I mean? You live this life here and we're just waiting for the penalty phase to begin when we die.

By the way, during a personal interview, the Pope has recently said that he doesn't believe in hell. Did you see that? Yeah, he does not believe in a literal hell.

He's actually an annihilationist. Well, he's not speaking for the church here, he said, but we're going to see where this goes. But if there's no forgiveness here, and then look with the fifthly, if Christ has not been raised, there's no one in heaven.

[29:43] He says, verse 18, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. That word there is used to describe a condition of those who, when they die, they die, they're separated from God.

They're not annihilated. They're separated from God. They're separated from anything and everything that is good. Lastly, if Christ has not been raised, verse 19, the joke is on us.

If we hope that in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most pitied, to be most pitied. Boy, you ever had a nightmare, and it's just very graphic, and it's just really a bad one, and then that feeling when you awaken and you realize this is just a nightmare.

I think that's what we are here. What a relief. Verse 20, but now, Christ has been raised from the dead. Perfect tense. This morning here, let's consider all of the blessings that we find in Jesus for all those who place their faith in the finished work of Christ.

First, and you can follow with me on your handout here, because of Jesus Christ, we can find forgiveness. What a wonderful thing that is. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[31:20] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God? That's a really amazing thing to think of this, that even though Jesus' resurrected body is glorified, and it's new that he still bears the scars from his crucifixion.

Secondly, because of Jesus Christ, we don't have to fear death. The same chapter here in 1 Corinthians, Paul says this, O death, where is your victory?

O death, where 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.

All this proves that Jesus is who he said he is, and it distinguishes him from all the other religious teachers out there, religious founders.

It's the reason why we sing about him every Sunday, the reason that we pray to him, the reason that we talk about him, and it's because he rose from the dead.

[32:42] Our text this morning points this out, but there's one more blessing that we must see, and it's saved for last. Look with me, verse 20. We have the promise of a new glorified body.

He says here that Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep. What's that mean? Well, Paul here is comparing Jesus' resurrection to an Old Testament celebration called first fruits, and in that

celebration, the first fruit was a token.

It was a sign of something better to come, and what Paul is teaching here is that when a believer dies, that we will one day receive new glorified bodies just like Jesus received.

And later in that same chapter, he says, 1 Corinthians 15, there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for star differs from star in glory, so is it with the resurrection of the dead.

What is sown perishable? What is raised imperishable? It is sown in dishonor? It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness?

[34:07] It is raised in power. What great descriptions here that await us. If you're here today, and maybe you're suffering, maybe there's some impediment that you're facing physically, maybe there's something emotionally that has scarred you and left you, left its impression in this life.

Maybe there's something right now that's just hanging over your head. Jesus is the answer, my friends. He's the answer. As the musicians come up, we're going to go right into the Lord's Supper where we actually remember what Jesus did.

On the night that he was betrayed, we learn that he took bread, and he had given thanks, and he broke it, and he said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, he took the cup also after supper, saying, this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

And then Paul adds, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. And that's what we're going to do here very shortly.

[35:41] Remember the Lord Jesus and what he did. I'd like to end with this other story about another man from England. He was a minister who lived in the 50s.

His name is William Sankster. And he too had a disease very much like the gentleman we just saw. He had a neuromuscular disease.

And when he learned that he had a disease, he involved himself in ministry more and more. Toward the end of his life, William Sankster said, he noticed that his legs became useless, his voice was completely gone, but he could still write with a pen.

And on an Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote this letter to his daughter. Here's what it said. It's terrible to awaken on Easter morning and to have no voice with which to shout, he is risen.

But it would be more terrible to have a voice but to not want to shout, he is risen. Would you agree with him?

[36:56] Jesus rose from the grave. Amen.