

“Evidence of the Resurrection”
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
(Preached at Trinity, April 4, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Today is Easter Sunday, the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of our greatest days. It commemorates the basis of our hope, our assurance that the death of Christ upon the cross accomplished our redemption. For the vast majority of human beings, the resurrection has little significance, at least in how they live their lives.
 - A. Only 42% of Americans know that the Easter is the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ.
 - B. Of those who know what Easter represents, many do not believe the resurrection actually occurred. They say it is contrary to reason and nature. People who die do not come back to life. To them it seems like the superstitious belief of the naïve.
 - C. For most Americans, the resurrection is just simply irrelevant. Christ is irrelevant. They are content to live their lives in the now, oblivious of eternity. They see Easter as a day marked by pastel colors, eggs, and bunnies. They focus on Easter egg hunts and jellybeans. The resurrection isn't a matter of serious contemplation. It's a three-day weekend but they really don't see much significance beyond that.
 - D. Surprisingly, even among those who identify themselves as Christians, most do not place any real importance upon the resurrection. Only 2% of Americans indicate Easter as the most important holiday of their faith. Most see belief in the Resurrection as of little significance. Most hold the position, its ok if you believe it, and its ok if you don't. It's not a big deal.
2. The resurrection is a big deal. The resurrection is central to Christianity. It is central to the Gospel message.
 - A. The resurrection is so significant that the early church changed the day of worship as a weekly celebration of this event.
 - B. The resurrection displays proof of God's acceptance of Christ's work upon the cross. It is the surety of our justification.
 1. It proved that Christ's sacrifice satisfied Divine justice - God raised Him. **Romans 4:25 NAU** - "He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."
 2. Jesus came to accomplish a particular work – to do the will of His Father And what was the Father's will? **John 6:39-40 NAU** - "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

- C. The resurrection of Christ makes possible His work as Mediator. There is no way of communion between God and man except through a Mediator. Sin has caused great enmity between God and man. Jesus serves as our Mediator to bring reconciliation and access to God. No resurrection, no Mediator.
- D. The resurrection is the surety that He's coming back
1. If Jesus were still in the tomb, we would have no assurance of ever seeing Him again.
 2. Jesus promised that He would both go away and He would also return.
- F. The Resurrection is the foundation of our blessed hope we shall experience resurrection from the grave.
- 1 Peter 1:3 NAU** - "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,"
3. It is essential that we believe the resurrection. It is essential to the Gospel message. We receive it by faith, but our faith is not a blind faith. It isn't credulity. Credulity is belief without evidence. Like believing in unicorns or leprechauns.
 4. The resurrection is not without substantial evidence. The Apostles, who were the first-generation Christians, were so absolutely convinced of the reality of the resurrection they were willing to lay down their lives for the risen Christ. No one in their right mind would be willing to die for a hoax.
 5. This morning I want to set before you some of the evidence for the resurrection from Paul's words here in 1 Cor. 15.
- I. The Testimony of Scripture – **V. 1-4**
- A. Paul had brought them the Word of God
- Verse 3** – "For I delivered unto you . . . what I received"
1. Paul was speaking from the authority of God
 - a. Paul was not speaking from personal opinion or speculation.
 - b. Nor was the resurrection an afterthought to the death of Christ
 2. The O.T. prophets had foretold the resurrection of Christ

Acts 13:32-35 NAU - "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.' ³⁴ "And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure *blessings* of David.' ³⁵ "Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."
 3. As Jesus spoke to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus He used the clear teaching of the O.T. Scriptures to explain His death and resurrection

Luke 24:25-27 NAS - "And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

- B. There are no fewer than 300 prophecies that point to the life and death of Christ.
 1. A mathematician calculated that the chances of just 48 of the Messianic prophecies being fulfilled by one man are a number 10^{157}
 2. Every aspect of our redemption was planned in eternity and foretold by the prophets

II. The Testimony of the Apostles – V. 5-7

- A. The Apostles were eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ
 1. They saw Him, touched Him, heard Him, ate with Him – **See 1 John 1**
1 John 1:1 NAU - "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life"
 2. They had no doubt as to the truth of the resurrection. It became the central theme of their preaching.
 3. As they sought a replacement for Judas one of their requirements was that he be a witness of the resurrection
- B. They knew that they were serving the risen Christ. This gave them great boldness. In fact, their lives were greatly transformed after the resurrection.
 1. Peter demonstrated this boldness after the resurrection
 - a. Before the resurrection he was timid, even to denying Christ.
 - b. After the resurrection he became bold. When he and John stood before the Sanhedrin and high priest they marveled at his courage. **Acts 4:13 NAU** - "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began to* recognize them as having been with Jesus."
 - c. Tradition tells us Peter was forced to watch his wife crucified. He encouraged her "Remember the Lord." He had assurance in the risen Christ.
 - d. When the moment of his own crucifixion came he asked to be crucified up-side-down – not being worthy to share the crucifixion of Christ
 2. The Apostle Andrew was bound to the cross & left to die of thirst & exposure - When faced with the cross he prayed "Hail, precious cross! Thou hast been consecrated by the body of my Lord and adorned with His limbs as rich jewels. I come to thee exulting and glad."
 3. The Apostle James was led away with boldness and courage and beheaded
 4. One-by-one as the apostles were martyred they died bravely because they trusted in the risen Christ. His words continued to ring in their ears. **John 14:2-3 KJV** – "In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."
 5. Do you have confidence in the risen Christ? He is with me. I will boldly serve Him even unto death.

III. The Testimony of other Eyewitnesses – V. 6

- A. Throughout history the testimony of multiple credible witnesses has been valued to determine the truth of a matter
1. The Bible set this as an absolute rule
Deuteronomy 19:15 NAU - "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."
Matthew 18:15-16 NAU - "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed."
1 Timothy 5:19 NAS - "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses."
 2. The witnesses of the resurrection were certainly compelling – not two or three but over 500 could testify.
 Paul states that most of them were still alive and could be questioned about the truth of the resurrection.
- B. It is interesting that there is no record of Jesus appearing to any but His followers
1. Until He revealed Himself He was not recognized
 - a. We can see this with Mary Magdalene
John 20:14-16 NAS - "When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher)."
 - b. We can also see it with the disciples on the road to Emmaus
Luke 24:15-16 NAS - "And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and *began* traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him."
 2. Jesus revealed Himself to His own – He has revealed Himself to you and me. Jesus stated that no one could know the Father unless He revealed Him.
Matthew 11:27 NAU - "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."

IV. The Testimony of Paul – **V. 8-11**

- A. Jesus' appearance to Paul was not only post-resurrection, it was post-ascension.
1. Jesus revealed Himself to Paul. Paul was convinced of the reality of the risen Christ.
 2. Paul is stating his testimony as evidence that Jesus is still alive and functioning with power and authority
- B. Paul refers to his experience as “one untimely born” – **Verse 8**
1. Paul sees his conversion as an untimely birth
Paul was saved too late to be one of the twelve. Yet, Christ personally came to him and made him an apostle.
 2. Paul was eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. Jesus appeared to him personally on the Damascus Road. The others with Paul could hear Jesus but could not see Him. Paul saw Him in the brightness of His glory.
 3. Paul was always humbled by his conversion
1 Corinthians 15:9 NAU - "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
 4. He never doubted his apostleship because he had seen the risen Christ! He had received a face-to-face call from the risen Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:10 NAU - "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."

V. I saved the greatest evidence for last. This is an ongoing evidence that is amazing and beyond dispute. The greatest evidence for the resurrection is the testimony of the power of the Gospel – **V. 1-3**

- A. There is great power in the Gospel
1. Paul is declaring that the Corinthian church was living evidence of its power
1 Corinthians 15:1 NAU - "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,"
 - a. ἵστημι – it means “to stand” but also to fix or establish.
 - b. The Corinthians had believed the Gospel and confessed Christ. They had been profoundly changed—transformed.
Romans 10:9 NAU - "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"
 - c. They had been delivered from paganism and idolatry. Although they were weak and divided, when compared with the Corinthian society they had undergone a radical transformation.
The very fact that they were continuing to stand was a testimony to the power of the Gospel.
 - d. Their lives were proof of the truth of the Gospel – the power of the Gospel; the power of the resurrection

2. Through the Gospel sinful men undergo a great transformation
1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"
 - a. How many countless people throughout the ages have experienced this transformation? Thieves and murderers transformed to love one another.
 - b. The risen Christ lives in us and through us.
- B. Paul is saying here that the resurrection is at the very heart of this transforming Gospel
1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NAU - "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"
1. If you remove the resurrection you destroy the Gospel
 2. The existence of the church for over 2000 years testifies to the power of the Gospel. Christians are emboldened because they serve a risen Savior.
 3. We can see the present reality of the resurrection in the lives of Christians. We haven't fallen in love with a phantasm, a ghost or delusion. We have fallen in love with the present reality of the risen Christ. We know Him and serve Him and long for the time when we will see Him face to face.
 4. This changes everything. We live with confidence. We live with the knowledge of His presence, His protection, His power. We live with the knowledge of His love for us.

Conclusion:

1. Is the resurrection of Christ a reality in your own life?
 Don't forget Paul's words in Colossians 3
 He sees all and knows all. He is always with us. Before He departed from earth He comforted His disciples, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
2. Does your belief in the risen Christ have an effect on the focus of your labors?
 - a. The reason most professing Christians do not give themselves for the gospel is that they do not really believe it.
 - b. For Paul, the natural conclusion of the resurrection is the spread of the good news of the Gospel.
3. May we live with the knowledge that He is with us. And may we live with the confidence that He is coming back to receive us unto Himself.
 This morning as we partake of the Lord's Supper may we remember we are celebrating the risen Christ. He's coming back!
1 Corinthians 11:26 NAU - "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."