

Resurrection of The Dead

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[0 : 0 0] I just want to speak for a few minutes this morning before we move to the baptisms and speak from God's word. That's what we do when we gather together and worship we hear God's word and we try and explain that word and teach that word and proclaim that good news message. And as I mentioned earlier we're looking at the whole subject of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on this Easter Sunday.

And that is a hugely significant theme and it's one of great hope and it's absolutely crucial to our faith as believers, as Christians. It's crucial not just to our faith but it's absolutely crucial to the gospel message, to the good news. Last week we spent quite a lot of time looking at the good news the proclaiming of good news and that the word even the word that is used here is about proclaiming good news. That's the Greek word it talks about proclaiming good news and that was the good news message that turned the world upside down and that changed the course of history because these disciples who were the bringers of that good news had been huddled in an upper room for fear of their life until they met with the risen Savior Jesus Christ. And so lots of churches were planted, lots of new believers came to faith in Jesus Christ and this is one of the early churches, the church in Corinth that we're reading the letter of Paul to. He was the apostle who brought the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of Jesus Christ and the good news to these churches and it's a baby church, it's an early church, it's a church that hasn't been on the go for very long and they're facing their first major crisis. Their first major crisis is that false teachers have come in and others have come in and said you don't really need to believe in the resurrection, it's just you know take it or leave it it's not that important, it didn't really happen and so Paul writes this letter to absolutely nail that teaching, to absolutely nail it on the head and say no, it's non-negotiable, it's absolutely crucial to everything that we believe. If there's no resurrection then just let's just close up shop completely and just eat

Easter eggs. Let's just do it and the clear logic of the teaching of the early church, the clear logic of the teaching here and of the message of the good news is that Jesus, as we saw last week, Jesus is the Son of God, he claimed that the death that we all experience in life is part of not just a physical thing but reflects a spiritual separation from God and that it's too deep as I was saying to the children for us to deal with, none of us have the power over the grave, none of us have the power to make our hearts right before God and to make us pure and clean, so he sent his Son Jesus to do that on our behalf and that he experienced that sin and separation from God and the wrath of God and the cross, the justice of God and the cross in our place and he was dead and he was buried and on the third day he rose again victorious over that power, victorious over death and with the blessing and the approval of God the Father for what he had done, he dies in our place, greater love is no man in this that he lay down his life for his friends, so the resurrection is a great seal of approval, it's that great significant and central truth and now in life and in the

Christian faith and in the Bible there's lots of great areas, there's a lot of things that we can have debates about and that we can have different opinions about, baptism is one of them, some churches only baptise adults who have come to faith and in other churches baptise adults who have come to faith and their children as we will be doing today, there's lots of different areas where we can have different opinions but this absolutely basic truth is non negotiable, it's completely crucial, it changes everything, if there's no resurrection, no resurrection of Jesus, there is absolutely nothing. Now I ask for a quote, I don't know if I asked for it very well so I'm not sure if it's coming up or not, will it come up?

It will, too, there we go. Okay that's a quote from C.S. Lewis, I'm not trying to prevent anyone saying that it really foolish thing that people say about Jesus, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept his claim to be God, that is the one thing we must not say, a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher, he would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he's a poached egg or a big chocolate egg or that, you've got to get his egg behind me, yes Lewis didn't say that, I said that, or else he would be the devil of hell, you must make your choice, either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse, you can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about him being a great human teacher, he's not left that open to us, he did not intend to, it's absolutely crucial, absolutely fundamental to our worship today, to our gathering, to the baptism for our children, to the life of faith that we live, can I just give you a couple of examples, mobile phones, the bane of our lives, you know, we've got these mobile phones and we use them all the time, but can you imagine if I came today with this amazing iPhone 12 and it's a kind of 8G turbo phone that can do 3D printing and all kinds of stuff, it's an amazing thing that it's just the best thing in the world and you're all just amazed by it, but then I say to you, but they haven't devised a battery that can work with it, it's a game changer, it's useless isn't it, an iPhone 12 that can do all these things, but without a battery it's completely useless, it is just a heap of junk, or outside that sometimes we see some really flash cars and it might be there's a Lamborghini Roadster out there, 6.5 litre 12 cylinder not to 6, the 2 and 2.5 seconds, you think that's amazing, what a machine, but then

[6 : 50] I add the kind of rider, afraid it hasn't got an engine. Game changer, useless, there are some things that absolutely are fundamental to the existence of something else, like a battery for a mobile phone or an engine for a Lamborghini or for any other car, without that it's all bluster and without the resurrection it's all bluster and what Paul is doing here is saying very simply it's either or, it's either Christ is the Redeemer or He's not and there's nothing really in between and that is what we put our faith in as Christians and that is what we want to share with our children and believe that they will come to know for themselves as we by faith have them baptised, so I want to say a couple of things either Christ is the Saviour and that's what Paul is saying here or He's not, okay and that's the whole argument in both in verses 1 to 11 and then later on in the chapter that we read Christ, He says and He's made clear and He's put His foundations deep down in this truth in the first to 11 verses, you know

Christ is the Saviour, He died for our sins, you know first importance He says that, He was buried, He was raised on the third day, that was prophesied in the Old Testament scripture, that was testified to 1, 2, 12, 500 people as we read last week, we didn't read that this week and it's transformed His own life and He said that was God's plan A and there is no plan B, there isn't a second plan, that is God's way, that God recognised our need, He came with in the first of Christ as our substitute, as our Saviour and the resurrection is proof of what He has done, that is the message of the whole gospel and it's the message and the power and the life that has changed hundreds of thousands of millions of people right through history right up until the present day, this is the truth that the gospel hinges on absolutely completely and fundamentally it's the first importance He says in some of the earlier verses here, it's not a vague faith we have, it's not a wispy faith, it's not just a kind of ethereal faith, well I've got a kind of vague hope in something or someone, it's based on the historicity and the fact of the person of Christ, the life of Christ, the claims of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and His resurrection is not fable and it's not wishful thinking by a bunch of guys who'd lost their leader and it's absolutely not symbolic, what can be symbolic about someone who didn't actually be raised from the dead, there's nothing symbolic about that apart from failure, if he wasn't raised from the dead, where's the symbolism, symbolic of what and we need to recognise and see that that is a vain and empty claim, the challenge for us if the gospel is true and if the message is true and if the claims of the gospel and of Jesus

Christ are true then it's a fact that changes everything, it changes everything and it's a fact for every person to consider because each one of us are faced with aging and death and spiritual separation from God in this life and eternally unless we come to terms with this fact of Jesus, you can look at it and you can examine it, you can reject it but you need to reject it having examined that truth and considered the alternatives because Paul isn't stupid enough here not to discuss the alternatives and not to think about the alternatives and he talks about them in the passage we read, he's well aware and so must we be, if there is no resurrection he clearly is right in saying that our faith is in vain and so is our preaching, more than that he says we're liars because we've been leading people up with a garden path, it's empty and foolish, we might as well believe in green goblins and believe in their resurrected Savior, if it isn't something that happened, if who they met and if who they saw wasn't the risen Savior who had defeated death and the grave forever then everything collapses, no resurrection today, no resurrection then death reigns, we need to recognise that either God from whom we are separated we will remain separated or there's just simply no God at all and death just reigns for whatever reason and we are left in a world where there is no ultimate meaning, no ultimate answers, where there's no redemption and suffering or for suffering there's no reason, no hope, where we choose either between randomness of evil and the evil that we see in our newspapers every day and we recognise or we debate over what is good and what is proper in our lives and Paul absolutely recognises if there is no resurrection and if Christ didn't come then the answer is that we simply party, that's what he says, if there is in Christ if there's no resurrection if it isn't true he said just let's party, let's just have a good time, he says that, he says you know if the dead are not raised let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die and that is absolutely great philosophy, if there is no resurrection let's forget as pretence and let's just have a party because that's all we've got, that's all there is, death still reigns we will live until we die but it's just one great big party and there's nothing to live for other than living for ourselves and living for the day so the resurrection is absolutely crucial, it's absolutely central to us, without it our faith is futile, we are to be pitied as Christians and a lot of people pity

Christians anyway but I think for the wrong reasons and maybe because they don't understand sometimes the gospel message or Christians give them reason to be pitiable, it makes us liars and it makes all the people who are willing to die for their faith absolute fools for standing up for the truth and for Christ the whole thing is a sharan, the whole thing is a lie so really on this Easter Sunday what Paul is saying to us and what we recognize and know and we remind ourselves of through this baptism these baptisms is that the resurrection really matters, it really matters for every one of us, it's good news, not more than that, it's great news, it's absolutely outstanding news that God is, that God is good, that God is holy, that God is just, that we are accountable to God, that he knows our need, he knows our guilt, he knows we can't put it right and so he comes and deals with our need and rescues us and defeats the power of the grave on our behalf and these are the truths that are significant to us that he's a rescuing, loving, gracious, forgiving, good, holy, pure God who is interested in investing himself in our lives and who will transform our hearts and clean us from the inside in a way that we just can't begin to do ourselves and give us victory over the grave so that even though we die yet we will live and go to be with him and that is hugely significant and hugely important. So I just ask the question, does it matter to you? Have you ever considered the significance of that historical fact that Jesus rose and defeat, rose from the dead and defeated the power of death, not for just, not for himself at all but for those who put their trust in him or maybe your philosophy of life is also written in the Bible as a warning, let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

Let's party and if Christ is raised from the dead then that philosophy of life is the great deception, that is the great deception and we need to consider and think about that if Christ is who he claims to be which we believe which the truth reflects and which the transformation of our lives and the changes in the lives of millions of people have borne testimony to today.

[16 : 21] So very briefly we will in a very short time we'll be baptising five lovely young people and we look forward to that together. I'm going to need some expert advice to make sure I baptise the right child with Echin and Meekle being twins and the thing is if I get it wrong they'll need to be called that for the rest of their lives, it's just crucial that I get it right and also of course it'll be easier with Amy and Fraser and Ruri and we look forward to that shortly.

And baptism whether it's baptism for an adult who has come to faith and hasn't been baptised as a child or for the children of believers is very much symbolic of that new life of the cleansing that is offered to us by Jesus and the forgiveness that he gives to us and the power and the hope of a future are present with him in the battles of this life and also a future with him in heaven and God asks that all who come to faith and put their trust in Jesus Christ are baptised. It's a symbol, it's a sign of a kind of badge of belonging to Jesus Christ and it's a privilege that he instructs us to share with our children if we are believers, share it with our children too, a recognition that our God is a covenantal God, he's a God who works through families and who gives the privilege of covenant membership of the gospel to children, not exclusively but he does work through families, he answers the prayers of us as parents and he gives us promises and privileges to all who are Christians about our children and as we bring them up in God's grace we challenge them to receive the benefits of the sacrament that has been taken in faith on their behalf and which they must take and take the saviour of that sacrament for themselves. It does not in and of itself save anybody, it is a sign and a seal of what by faith and in promise we believe will be our children's as we bring them up the way God has intended us to do. So we look forward to these baptisms and it's very exciting and very beautiful thing to be involved in today. So I'm just going to pray briefly and then we're going to sing that Psalm again and I've asked someone to go down and get the kids to come back up so the kids can watch and be part of this day as well. So let's bow our heads and pray. Heavenly Father we ask and pray for your blessing and for your help to be with us during these baptisms that we would know your help, that we would know your grace, we know your favour, we know your Holy Spirit's guidance and presence with us and that we would rejoice as a Christian family as a church today at these families and at the babies and all that they represent and all they mean and the wider families that are here today to support and to have been very much part of the story of their lives and we thank you that we have new life in the congregation in different ways and with different people, sometimes new people coming to the congregation, sometimes people becoming Christians and joining us, sometimes people moving here, sometimes babies being born, thank you that little Juliet is with us today and we pray your blessing on them as a family, the

Brox and we pray that you would be with all the families who can't be here today we're away at the Easter weekend, we remember them and we pray that they would have rest, refreshment and recovery on their vacation, their holidays. So bless us with your presence now we ask in Jesus name. Amen.