

Resurrection of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] So as I said we're going to be looking at this chapter, God willing over these next few weeks and we're going to look today at the first section, first Corinthians chapter found in very well known passage and I hope the truths of the passage are well known to us, but we know also it is always worth returning to these well known truths in our lives.

And I don't suppose for a moment any of us were untouched by the horrors of German wings flight 4U3525 that crashed this week.

It's been headline news obviously and it is a hugely distressing thing to hear about and to follow and there's been a lot of pointing and sad and sometimes restricting media involvement in things like that which seems to be overkill in the situation.

But I'm sure for us we recognise the huge tragedy that it is and it may bring into our lives many questions about the nature of life and God and suffering and tragedy and it may also just remind us of the fragility of life, the speed and finality for some people of death and of the brokenness of the world in which we live and the brokenness of people's lives and people's minds and people's hearts and just this overriding sense that things are just not right.

Things are wrong. Things are wrong in this world in which we live and a tragedy like we've experienced this week just kind of brings that into focus. I know it's far away from us in many ways and I presume that not many of us or any of us would know anyone personally who's involved but it's brought into our living rooms and there's great mystery as we are confronted with these things, great sadness, great grief but it also does remind us I think of as Christians of what is important, what is really important in life and why we need to focus our minds and hearts on what is very important in life because this letter was written to a church, it was written to a young church, a church that had not been Christian for many, very long.

[2 : 4 5] It was a church plant in Corinth and the people who became Christians had not been Christians a long time but it's very interesting because they seem to have forgotten what was important in that short time.

We talk about young churches and church plants and the excitement of these things and the vibrancy of their faith and the greatness of what they were experiencing but it wasn't long before they had forgotten what was really important and this letter was written because they were in a mess as a church.

They were struggling spiritually, they were divided one with another, they were fighting each other and there was all kinds of divisions and cliques and rich and poor and different groupings within the church, they weren't acting in a Christ-like way.

Policies, they were kind of lukewarm, they'd lost their faith and the courage and strength and vibrancy of their faith, they were morally lax, there was sexual immorality within that church that would kind of take our breath away in some ways.

Frankly it was a mess. This young church, this young fledgling church was a mess because exactly of the fact they had forgotten what was important, they had forgotten what was really significant.

[3 : 57] And part of what we're going to do is remind ourselves of what's really important for us as a church and as individual Christians and focus our attention on these things.

Paul recognised that and that's really why this chapter, it wouldn't have been written as a chapter in Paul's time, it was just one letter but for us this chapter, why he's re-emphasised this because he wants them to focus on what's really important.

And so I'm asking you today as I have to ask myself, what's really important in your life? What are the really important things? What's significant? Was there just a blip this week when you heard the news of the aircraft?

Did it just hold you back, draw your breath a little bit? Or did it just kind of go over our heads as well? Just this life, that's what happens. What's really important if anything was to happen?

What is really important to you? What do you love? What's significant in your heart and what's significant in mine? Because Paul wants the Christians in Corinth and he wants us to recognise the Gospel, the good news.

[5 : 08] That's what he reminds them of. And verse 1, now brothers, he says, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and which you've taken your stand. The Gospel, the good news.

That's what was absolutely significant and important. And it's interesting, there's a word there where he says, I want to remind you. And it's probably not quite strong enough.

The word is, I really want to make known to you the Gospel. He's not saying they weren't Christians, he wasn't saying that they got it wrong, but he's saying it's almost, and I guess that's what reminding does.

He says, I'm kind of wanting to make it known to you all over again. Just pretend you've not in a sense believed and I'm bringing you the Gospel for the first time. I want to make it known. I want to remind you of it.

And what he's saying is that in all the mess of their lives and of their church and of their politics and all the rubbish that they were engaged in as a church and their ethical and moral standards, he's saying, look, you've forgotten what is fundamental to what you believe as Christians.

[6 : 10] And when we forget that, we lose sight of what is important in the Christian faith and indeed what is important generally.

It's encouraging that though the church was such a mess, he still called them brothers, sisters, they called them family. He hasn't abandoned them. He hasn't said they weren't believers. He hasn't said that they're unworthy of the name of Christ.

He's calling them. He's associating with them. He's not preaching from in high. He says, I've got a message from God. He says, but I'm one of you and he says it's important that we get back to basics.

The gospel that I preached to you and it's great that word for preaching there is just it just means to declare good news. So he kind of says, I want to remind you of the good news of the good news that I've declared to you.

There's a repetition there almost and the word is different from the word that we would often associate with preaching, which is about teaching.

[7 : 16] And there's a lot of teaching that we do from the pulpit or from our interaction with one another as Christians around the Bible. This is about declaring some important part of preaching, not just here behind the safety of the lectern, but in your own lives.

And in our own lives that we tell, we declare this great good news and it's really speaking about telling good news to those who need to hear it. And you rub shoulders and I rub shoulders with people all the time who need to hear good news, don't we?

Something worthwhile, something worth sharing. Do we grasp and consider and think about the gospel, the Bible, the message, the Christian faith we have as good news? I know we've heard it a hundred times, but do we genuinely recognize it as something good in this world of brokenness and pride and selfishness and sin?

We live, don't we, in a relentlessly bad news world, a world that is, and when sometimes we look at the mirror we see it ourselves, that despair and division and mistrust and selfishness and plunging into that is the good news of the gospel that Paul wants the Corinthians to be reminded of, that what we have, what we own, what we possess, what we share is good news.

I think sometimes we've, I'm sure sometimes, I'm sure a lot of the time we've lost sight of that. Well, if you guys are like me, then that will be the case.

[8 : 54] Maybe you're not, maybe you're right up there. But if you're like me, then I think sometimes we go about as if really everything's kind of bad news.

And our attitude to one another and our attitude to worship and our attitude to living the Christian life, I know and probably more than anyone I emphasize the battle and the struggle that it is the Christian life, but it is fundamentally, primarily good news.

And Paul goes on to explain what that good news is. And I'm really sorry, but I'm going to give you absolutely nothing new.

But I hope that it's something we can relate to and consider, knowing it, experiencing it and sharing it. So what's the good news? We've, the last three Wednesday evenings we've been talking about sharing the gospel, talking about that practically and how that looks and how we can do that and why we struggle with that.

This is a great template for knowing the basic fundamental truths of what the good news is. What people say. And if we've ever said that when we share the gospel, it's good news that we've got to tell people, maybe we should try that.

[10 : 08] Maybe when someone asks you about your faith, the next time they ask you about your faith, you say, well, I've got some really good news for you. Have you? Yeah, I've got some very good news for you.

What is that good news? We don't need to change it. We don't need to adapt it. But what we can say is Christ died for our sins. That's what I received. I passed on to you the first importance that Christ died for our sins.

Now that's the first thing that we can remind ourselves of that God in Christ came to us to do something major. He did something.

He died, but he died for our sins. That's what he did. Christ died for our sins. He died in our place.

Now that we know that so well, it kind of trips off our tongue and we probably don't think about it terribly much. But it's this recognition that God has done something, something radical in death.

[11 : 09] He's died, but he's not died for his own sins. And he's not died just a natural death or he's not died because some Romans decided to put him to death. He died specifically for our sins.

So that kind of brings into death this whole idea of our responsibility and our being involved somehow in Calvary, that we're involved in what God has done and that our death isn't just something natural.

It isn't just like a lion or a dog dies and a tree dies and you and I die. It's just part of life. He's saying that there's something different about human death.

It seems strange to be talking about good news when you're talking about death, doesn't it? It's an important thing to do. It's important to think about your death or to think about what it's like to die and to think what happens and what it's about.

Because from the moment we're being born, we're dying, aren't we? So we're dying and the Bible says that sin has killed us or it's killing us and it's killed us spiritually.

[12 : 25] In other words, we're under a kind of sentence of eternal death, separation from life from God, from the author of life.

Our sin does that too as a rebellion against Him, our independence from Him, our lack of love for Him. So there's a spiritual element to our life and to our death and the good news is that God, Christ, died for our sins.

So He deals with our eternal death. We die physically, but as we're going to see, we're going to be resurrected physically as Christians.

But when people die physically, if they have not come to Christ, then they enter into a place of eternal separation from Him. But Christ has stopped that.

He stops the eternal separation beyond the grave for any who trust in Him because He's taken the judgment due to us on Himself. Christ died for us.

[13 : 29] I remember, I've maybe said this before here, that it was a baptism here a number of, a couple of years ago and it was, I think it was, a Puss in Rachel's baby, I think.

And there was a number of firefighters there. And I mentioned at one point, greater love is no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.

And that that was the kind of, the phrase that is used by the Lodin Fire Service when they consider their own work and they consider the dangers that are involved in it.

So it has a poignancy for them and it could touch them. And that's a very true fact, is that this is good news because greater love has no man than this than he lays down his life for his friends.

And that is the good news of the God of Jesus died for our sins. That is the best news you will ever hear if you will accept it.

[14 : 37] It's no good if you will not because there's a, as we're going to see, there is an acceptance to be had. So that's the good news, Jesus died for our sins.

But it says he was buried. Now I'm not going to spend time on these because our time is short. But the four gospels are very clear about that, that Jesus died on a cross and he was buried.

He died. He didn't swoon. It wasn't a trance. Nobody stole his body. The Roman soldier who was an expert in death plunged a sword into his side and out, we're told in Scripture comes what looks like water and blood.

Sure sign of death. He was an expert in death. Jesus says he gave up his own spirit. He's placed in a sealed tomb.

He was buried. He died. Jesus, Son of God, died. But also very significantly, the good news is that he was raised on the third day.

[15 : 43] And that's really what we think about, isn't it, when we come towards Easter time, we think about the death, but also the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now that's a hugely significant fact because it means that Jesus Christ has shown himself by the favour of the Father who raised him from the dead to have satisfied divine justice and defeated the power of evil and death and the grave.

That's good news. The penalty has been paid in full, it says, over the cross. And he is just now to forgive us because he's raised, he's at the right hand of the Father and he's the first of all who believe in him so that we can also know the hope and the good news of resurrection.

Now as you get older and as life goes on and as we get older and as we get weaker, then in many ways you think that's it. The best years have passed.

You're just got old age and decrepitude to look forward to. It's a terrible thing if you don't have the hope of the Gospel. It's truly awful to be growing old without the hope of the Gospel which says that we will die but we will be raised again and we will know newness of life.

That isn't the end. Terrible thought to think that this life is all that there is. Not from wishful thinking point of view but from our very beings that that is hardwired into us.

[17 : 12] We are made to live and we are made to live with God and we are made to live in God's presence. Death. Beautifully here is described by Paul as sleep for the believer because that's what it is.

Those who have fallen asleep is the sting and the ugliness and the brutality have been removed for the believer and the resurrection is because of what Jesus has done.

The grave will not be able to hold you as it was unable to hold Jesus Christ. The best is still to come. Getting into your 60s, 70s and 80s is not the final chapter for you if you're a believer.

The best is still to come. These are the facts on which our faith rests so that Paul wants to remind us people that they've forgotten the facts of the gospel.

It's not going to make believe it's not just being made up. It's the historicity of these truths that we cling on to, we hold on to, that we plant our feet firmly on.

[18 : 17] These facts were reminded or twice were reminded in this section from 3 to 8 are according to Scripture that these were part of the plan and the purpose of God that are gently revealed through the Old Testament.

There's not a great deal of talk in the Old Testament about resurrection but there is a gentle whisper towards that truth from Isaiah 53, from Psalm 16 that we're going to finish with today, not leave our body in the grave.

Isaiah 6, whole idea of Jonah and the Wales belly for three days and three nights. Then there's Abram with his son who he believed Christ God was able to resurrect even though he perished.

We looked at Daniel and the seal on the tomb and Daniel's coming out from the tomb. There's various clear indications and movements towards this great truth according to plan.

Paul reminds this early church that it was evidenced as well not only in the facts of what he is recorded but evidenced by those who believed that they had seen the resurrected Savior in verses 5 to 9.

[19 : 38] He appeared to Peter and then he appeared to the 500 and then he appeared to James, Jesus brother and then abnormally born he appears to Paul himself.

So we've got this great known historical truth that Paul is saying, look you're not believing in something daft and something fabled, you're believing in a resurrected risen Son of God.

It's not wishful thinking, it's verifiable. He's saying to this young church, he's saying it was witnessed by people. You can still see, you can still go and ask some of them, go along and ask them. Some of them have not yet fallen asleep, they're still alive.

Go and ask them. Go and ask them about the resurrected Savior that they saw, that this risen Savior that Paul himself saw out of time to the others is great good news.

It's great good news we have. And of course along with that evidenced in the lives of others and the truth of the character and the person of Jesus and the facts of the gospels it's experienced in Paul's own life.

[20 : 45] So Paul backs up what he's saying, not only have you seen the resurrected Savior, not only do you know about his life and his death and the fact that it was, Scripture was pointing towards it, you've seen my own life, you know.

I don't even deserve to be an apostle because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God I am what I am. So they also had Paul's transformed life, you know, he was a Christian killer.

That's what he came to do. That's what his work was, it was to be a Terminator. He was the Terminator of this new church. He would have loved to just annihilate the early Corinthian church before he became a Christian, but he met with the risen Savior on the Damascus road in a very dramatic way, a radical change from pride to humility becomes this great hard worker for the kingdom of God sharing this incredible news because of the grace of God, because of God's love, because he realized that according to Scripture, Christ died for Paul's sins.

Christ died for my sins and he knew that and it changed it was good news because he was forgiven and he was given life and he could see for the first time who God was and how much God loved him and he could serve God and so he was a great master.

So just as we close, I think these truths so very well to kind of lecture or preach on them from the front, but these truths are critical for all of us to understand.

[22 : 29] I don't know what tomorrow holds for me or for you. I don't know if this might be the last opportunity you have to hear the Gospel or to remind yourself of it to share.

This might be the last time I will preach from here. We don't know. I couldn't think of preaching anything better as my last sermon than this great message because Paul says it's of first importance.

What I received, I passed on to you as of first importance and that is great, isn't it? We can't better that and the critical nature of the question is of first importance in your life as you will go from here and as you will stop hearing the nagging words of the preacher.

Will it be for you of first importance? What is I ask again? What is a priority in your life? What is most important?

What is of first importance to you? Nothing more important surely than the knowledge of dealing with the spiritual separation you have from God, the death that that brings both now and in the future.

[23 : 47] And as a Christian how easy it is to forget that, to forget what is of first importance and to think that maybe we move beyond that in our knowledge, in our insight, in our understanding that that's the kind of ABC of the Gospel for simpletons but we've moved on to deeper truths in that.

I don't think that is ever the case. But we must let this always influence our thinking in our life, that's what made Paul who Paul was.

It was the grace of God that made him this amazing apostle. It was the prism through which he saw all things. You and I as Christians, we are a Christian today, we possess great, great good news and it's great, great good news for the people that you see day to day who don't know Jesus.

It's the best news ever for them and that's what we need to share. We don't need to tell them that we go to a Presbyterian church or that we dress up on Sundays or that we like the Bible.

None of these things necessarily will say them. We need to tell them the good news. They don't need to know about what denomination we belong to. They need to know the good news that Jesus died for our sins.

[25 : 04] That is the news that he has given us that will transform people's lives. And you're the ones that will preach it because you're the ones that are around people who need to hear it much more than I am.

But it doesn't excuse me. I've got to find and know people around that I can share this great good news with. But you every day are rubbing shoulders with people who need to hear that good news.

It's of first importance. And it's fixed truth, isn't it? It's fixed truth. Paul says, what I received. I passed on to you first and foremost.

Paul and make up. This isn't Paul's gospel. This is something he received and he passed on. He Paul simply a trustee.

And even at this stage, you know, we talk about a gospel tradition. We talk about a truth that is passed on just as the Old Testament was talking about the coming Messiah.

[26 : 03] So that this truth, this first importance, it's not up for grabs. We don't sit around and convocate about it and have debates about whether it's of first importance anymore or what the truth is.

It's unalterable. Don't mess with it. Don't mess with this truth because there's no other truth that parallels it and it's truth that transforms life, you see.

We simply can't change the truth because it's either unacceptable or we think it's out of touch. You know, we're custodians of the truth.

The truth isn't like Chinese whispers. It doesn't change the further along it gets along the line, the chain. It doesn't change.

The gospel is unchanging. It is not fabled whispers that get passed down through generations. What we believe today in St. Columba, see what you believe in your life, is what has been received by us and passed down from other generations because it's the same message as Paul spoke of and told because it is transforming.

[27 : 12] We pass on the good news. That's what we do. Sometimes we're very bad at it and sometimes it's not that important. Corey's there. Corey's preaching tonight. He's doing the next series of the doctrine series that we're looking at and Corey and Heather have just had a baby and Katrina will often say to me, oh, you've heard there's a new baby.

She said, tell me the details. Oh, yeah, I think it's a girl. What kind of way was it? I'm not sure. She was born at home or in a hospital.

I think she was born in a van somewhere. I can't remember. Or even worse, it's like at weddings. And someone was coming and saying to me, well, what was the bride wearing? I don't know, a white dress.

We don't know the details. We pass on. We make mistakes. We don't notice things that are insignificant to us, but we can't do that with the gospel.

We can't just pick and choose what we think are significant facts. It's our first importance. It's fixed truth that we have. The fixed truth of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

[28 : 19] That He was buried. That He was raised again on the third day. There's nothing else that transforms life and can save people and can redeem people.

It's first importance. It's fixed truth. And the last, the very last thing I want to say is it's actionable. This truth is actionable by every one of us.

It's truth that requires a response. You can't remain untouched or unmoved by this gospel message.

See the words Paul uses here? This is the gospel that you have received, on which you've taken your stand, that you're to hold on to firmly.

And it's a message that you're being saved. It's an ongoing reality. It's not just the one off conversion experience that you are continually growing in grace and revealing that salvation in your life.

[29 : 17] So it's actionable. It's actionable. Salvation is God's gift. It's all of God. I'm going to say something here, just dangerous here, but biblical, is that you need to receive it.

You need to receive it. I'm not going to go into the mystery of our being spiritually dead and how we receive something when we're spiritually dead. There's this that truth that we receive it.

This is what God asks us to do, to receive it. And as Christians, to take our stand on it, to hold on to it firmly.

You have that responsibility to get up from here and in your Christian life to hold on to it firmly. You have that responsibility just as I have. We can't just sit there before God and luxuriate in inaction and say, one day in the future I might believe, one day when I've ironed out all my problems and all the difficulties I have, I might believe Christ died for your sins.

Get that and act on it before it's too late. The gospel isn't to be a sideshow. It isn't just to be the Sunday morning uncomfortable feeling that you may have if you have not yet committed to Christ, but you come along to church anyway because you think somehow it might do you good.

[30 : 45] It's this must be the foundation of your life on which you must take a stand. And as Christians, the problem with the Corinthian churches, they weren't taking a stand on it.

They were being sexually immoral and drunken and cliquish and proud and arrogant. They just thought it was something that had happened and now once for all and it didn't really affect their lives. It's got to affect our lives, my friends, because then that is what will give people the question about your faith.

It affects their worldview, it affects our ethics. We've got to believe it and hold fast on to it. Can I say that that is by prayer. That's how we hold fast on to it.

By keeping on, keeping on in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and no one else can do that for you. No church, no minister, no Christian friend, no nobody can do what you must do, which is to hold fast through our relationship with Jesus Christ and His word and in prayer.

That is what will enable us to work hard in His kingdom. I think sometimes with this I finish. I think sometimes we take the gospel and the fact that we are saved by God's grace and somehow somewhere along the lines we get a very unbiblical quote from it which is I'm alright Jack.

[32 : 12] We are saved, Christ saved us and somehow it means I'm alright Jack and we can be dismissive of others.

We can be quite arrogant with that. As Christians we can become quite arrogant with that either of weak Christians in the church or of people who don't believe and say well they're spiritually dead and Christ didn't save them but He saved me.

That is not a true understanding of grace and it's not a true understanding of the gospel. Christ died for me, should throw us onto our knees and should give us such grace and love for other people that we say why me and not them and would make us want to pray for, support, encourage, build up, be patient with, serve and go the extra mile because of this great good news.

Christ died for my sins. That's where our heads in prayer. Father God we ask that you by your spirit would take that truth and apply it to our hearts.

If we've been Christians for 50 years may it just come to us as fresh as if we've never heard it. May we relive it and not be like the Corinthian church which not only need reminded but kind of needed to hear it again.

[33 : 37] May we never graduate beyond this truth but may it not be a cold or a simple mantra that we don't allow soak into the depth of our soul and our heart and realise what astounding good news it is to be loved by God to such a degree that He would be nailed to a cross, flesh ripped apart and separated in some mysterious and remarkable way from His own Father as He bore the price for our sins.

Lord we pray that it would have great effect on any who might be here today who are not yet Christians, who are maybe just teetering on the edge, who hold to the church and hold to attendance and hold to these outward things, maybe hoping one day to believe or one day that they'll be changed but passive.

Lord may they see the urgency of receiving, of taking hold of standing firm and of not blaming God for not believing or not waiting on God to somehow magically give them faith because we know that He is already standing at the door of their heart knocking, seeking entry through His Word and through His finished work.

We pray and ask that we would see many in our church and in our community and among our friends and neighbours being told and hearing in these next few days is good news.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.