

**The Federated Church of Hyannis ~Reverend Derek L. White, pastor
Sermon for April 18, 2021 _ Easter: Part 3**

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12-33

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

Introduction:

Welcome to part three of our series on Easter. To share the liturgical tradition of Easter, there are seven weeks of Easter in the liturgical calendar. This time takes us all the way up to Pentecost, which is May 23rd this year. Pentecost is a significant day in the liturgical calendar.

But we are in week three of Easter and still discussing the resurrection. Today's passage is a continuation of Paul's thesis that he presents to the church in Corinth. You may recall from last week how Paul made a convincing argument that the resurrection is true. If we can accept that the resurrection is true, then we must also consider why it is so significant. In other words, what does the resurrection mean to the people in Corinth and to us today?

PART 1: Why is it important?

Just because something is true does not necessarily make it important. Paul's sermon here to the church in Corinth is not only to tell them that the resurrection is true, but also to communicate to them why it was an important thing in their lives. Corinth was a very unique city in the Roman Empire. It was a very wealthy Greek city known for luxury. If you ever purchased a car or a fancy couch, you may have been up sold by the salesperson by the feature of Corinthian leather. Corinth was a very wealthy affluent city that had a history of being the Las Vegas of the Greek and Roman Empire. What happened in Corinth stayed in Corinth. It was like the sin city of the time. The main problem in Corinth was sin. Maybe other cities might be spared judgement, but Corinth was the hedonistic epicenter of culture at the time. While they believed Jesus was resurrected from the grave, they may have believed they were beyond being saved from sin. But when Paul comes to them he explains that they too can receive forgiveness of sin because the price Jesus paid on the cross covered even their sins.

PART 2: The Same is True Today

The same can be said today for many. I have encountered many who say they believe in the resurrection, but they still feel that they are beyond salvation. Perhaps you have encountered individuals like that. They believe in Jesus and they believe in the resurrection, but they just can't believe that their sins are forgivable. See, the resurrection must be more than just a fact. There is a purpose behind it. Many people know the story, but not everyone knows the reason why it happened. And here is the most significant truth there is.

Part 3: The Significance of the Resurrection

God believes we are redeemable. Let that sink in for just a minute. God believes we are redeemable. Jesus didn't die and rise from the grave to show how powerful he is. He didn't do it to show off. It wasn't just a miracle like the many other miracles Jesus did. It wasn't to just prove that Jesus is the Son of God and he can

do things you and I cannot do. It wasn't for show. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave to prove God believes we are redeemable. The Corinthians believed in the resurrection, but many struggled (like many do today) to believe God believes humanity is redeemable. That despite the worst sins in the world, God can wash away those sins.

PART 4: Redemption

What is redemption? Just the other day I was with someone and we were looking at various plants growing in a vacant lot. There was a flowerpot that had something growing in it. I couldn't tell what it was. I didn't know if it was some kind of plant that was just starting to grow like so many plants do in spring. So I asked what kind of plant it was. My friend laughed at me and asked if I was serious. Did I really not know what kind of plant it was? Turns out it was just an old flowerpot and the plant growing in it was grass. I didn't know if it was grass or not because it was in a flowerpot growing. I suspected it might be just grass, but I also thought it might be some plant growing that hasn't bloomed yet. Redemption is seeing value in things often overlooked. How many people feel that they don't have value or worth because they are often discarded or overlooked? The world doesn't value them. No one sees the potential in them. So what if Jesus rose from the grave, it is a nice story but what difference does it make?

PART 5: The Corinthians

The Corinthians felt they had been written off by everybody, so why not enjoy the pleasures of life. They didn't see any chance of salvation, so they learned to enjoy the moment. They indulged in whatever pleasure they could find to pass the time until their death. They didn't see sin as something that could be cured. That is until Paul came and shared the Good News with them. The resurrection is more than just a fact, it is a promise that God made. The promise was that God is willing to pay the price to give value to that which everyone said had no value. No matter how bad the sin and how worthless a person may feel because of that sin, God still sees we are worth redeeming. The death of Jesus is the price for sin. What Paul says in his letter to Corinth in verse 17 is this, ***“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”*** In essence, if Jesus did not rise from the grave then your sins would not have been paid in full. It is only because he rose from the grave after taking on the sins of the world that we have the assurance our sins are paid in full.

The resurrection is not just a fact, it is a guarantee that the curse of sin has been broken and the price has been paid in full to redeem us. And because the price was so high, the value God gives us is much higher than the world would ever give us. The Corinthians really appreciated things of high value. So, when Paul tells them how much they are truly worth in the eyes of God they begin to believe they have higher value than what they previously believed.

CONCLUSION: Value

What the resurrection means is everyone has value in the eyes of God. God set the price for sin so high that no one could ever pay it. And because that value is higher than anyone could afford, when Jesus pays the price for our sins our stock rises exponentially beyond what we could ever envision. Every life has value. It doesn't matter where someone grew up, how much education they have, what titles or jobs they hold, what color, gender, sexual orientation they are. God loves and values every life. It is truly sad the world would still seek to devalue people for whom God sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross to redeem. Right now the world is a little crazy. For far too long certain groups of people have been made to feel like they don't matter. Like their lives are worth less than other lives. And I know it doesn't make sense to a lot of people. It is true, the world is unfair, unbalanced, and filled with injustice. But to God all life has equal worth, equal value, and is deserving of equal justice. And as a people who have found salvation and redemption through Christ's death and resurrection, we need to treat every life with the value God has given every person. No life is worth less than another. Amen.