

The Federated Church of Hyannis
Reverend Derek L. White, Pastor
Sermon for April 4, 2021

C.S. Lewis, the great literary giant of the 20th century, was invited to a symposium with the world's greatest theologians and church historians. The topic of discussion was, "What makes Christianity unique in comparison to all the other world religions?". After much debate on the subject Lewis finally stood up to speak and said that the answer is obvious, "it is the resurrection". While many other world religions have prophetic leaders that have inspired others, Jesus is the only one to be resurrected from the grave. What makes Jesus truly unique from every other prophetic leader is "He arose".

Easter is the celebration of that good news, that Christ arose from the grave. If Jesus was not who he claimed to be, would he have been able to rise from the grave? Many have claimed to come in the name of God, but how can we know if their message is true? We can't without the resurrection. The resurrection is the seal that certifies who Jesus claimed to be and what Jesus taught is 100%, grade A, fully guaranteed, notarized, and backed by God to be true.

Jesus' message is more than to love others and be a good person, it is the authoritative word of God. Before the crucifixion the disciples one by one abandoned him and denied knowing him as he was charged by the religious leaders as being a blasphemer. If they were so quick to abandon him after the people had proclaimed him the King of the Jews, why would they return to him after his death? They doubted who he claimed to be and what he taught as being from God. What convinced them that Jesus is who he claimed to be and what he taught is the empty tomb; the resurrection.

If there is no resurrection, there can be no certainty that his promises of eternal life are true. The only way to prove that he has the authority to offer eternal life is to rise from the grave. Jesus' miracles were not for show. They were signs that proved his authority given to him by God the Father. The miracle of healing the man who could not walk was to show he had the authority to forgive sins. The resurrection is the proof that he is the Son of God who has authority over death. It is one thing to raise others from the dead, it another to raise oneself from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ is the most documented historical event in the history of the world. In 2000 years, no one has been able to offer reasonable proof to dispute the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. We know from the hundreds of accounts of the crucifixion recorded in the first century how he died and that he was dead with certainty. We also have hundreds of accounts from the first century that he was seen by hundreds after the crucifixion. *1st Corinthians 15:6* "After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep". The disciples saw him on numerous occasions and Thomas' testimony of being able to put his finger in the nail holes confirm that it was a bodily resurrection and not an apparition of Jesus. He is risen!

Several years ago, I worked with a colleague in ministry who said the resurrection didn't matter to him. I had to speak up and say that it mattered to me. The resurrection matters. Anyone can make the claims Jesus made about himself, but only Jesus has the ability to back it up by rising from the grave. As C.S. Lewis stated, what sets Jesus apart from all the rest is the resurrection. Nicky Grumble from the Alpha series stated that the resurrection is either of significant importance or of no importance; the one thing it cannot be is moderately important. One cannot proclaim "he is risen" with a period, it must be proclaimed with an exclamation. It is the boldest proclamation God has made to humanity.

Perhaps in a modern world the resurrection does not seem to be as significant of an event as it was for the disciples. In our modern world of medicine there are many stories of near-death experiences. Death upon the cross was not a near death experience, it was certain death. Many of us have read the book "90 Minutes in Heaven". While the main character in that book was dead for only a couple minutes, it took years with the most advanced medicine in the world to get him to be able to partially walk. After three days of being dead from death on the cross Jesus walked with his disciples' miles on the road to Emmaus. There is no modern equivalent comparison with all the advancements in medicine that can compare to the resurrection account of Jesus. Even with modern day miracles through advancement in science and in medicine, they don't come anywhere close to the miracle of the resurrection. The only explanation that makes any sense of the resurrection is that Jesus truly is who he claims to be.

If Jesus is who he claimed to be, and I fully believe Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God, it is of such significant importance that it is life changing. Jesus is so much more than a person who taught to love others, he is the Christ! Because he is risen! Paul, in his letter to the Romans says this, "*But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. "Romans 10:8-9*

Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All authority has been given unto Jesus the Christ. Those who confess Jesus as Lord and who believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead will be saved. Jesus is not an earthly king like the people expected on Palm Sunday, he is the King of all creation. He is the Christ, the risen Lord.

As we gather together on Easter Sunday let us confess Jesus Christ is Lord and believe with all our hearts, He is Risen!