

RISE
Part 3: “The Implications of the Resurrection”
Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12-22

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on February 18, 2018 by Pastor Barton Priebe

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** There are two ways you will hear the resurrection of Jesus preached in Victoria this spring. The first is the historic and orthodox way. That is, to preach the resurrection as an historical event in which Jesus rose bodily from the grave.
 - The second way that most mainline or liberal churches in Victoria will preach it is as a symbol or a spiritual principle. How do you preach the resurrection in this way? *The Vancouver Sun* ran a front-page article by Stephen Hume that demonstrates this perfectly.
- Hume wrote, **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** ***“It is not by accident that the Christian celebration of sacrifice and resurrection coincides with the beginning of the seasons in which life emerges again from the apparent death that winter represents. All around us there is now evidence of rebirth. Bears wake from hibernation with newborn cubs...courting frogs sing the gloom from the flooded swamp land...It’s the nature of human beings to seek spiritual analogs for what they observe in the natural world.”***¹
 - So Hume is saying that when human beings look at nature we find an encouraging and optimistic principle of life. It is the principle that life arises out of death, that winter gives way to spring, that an acorn must die for a forest to grow, that tragedy is an opportunity for new beginnings.
 - And so in the next few months you will hear sermons or read articles in *McLeans*, *Newsweek*, or *Time* that will say, **“We cannot believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. These ancient people were simply giving a spiritual analogy for what they observed in nature. What matters is the lasting principle of the resurrection that nature illustrates. It is the principle of life arising out of death.”**
- But as has often been pointed out, nature actually teaches us the opposite. Nature is harsh. Nature is not optimistic. The strong kill the weak until they go extinct. The sun is burning out. The universe is not growing into life – it is running down into death.
 - Moreover, this utterly fails us in real life. When a man has just lost his wife in a car accident, it is cruel to say, **“don’t worry your wife’s death is an opportunity for new beginnings.”** No, it’s not. His wife is dead.
 - Resurrection as symbolism utterly fails us when we need it most.
- But are we just splitting hairs here? Does it really matter if Jesus literally rose or can we just take it as a principle? Paul’s answer this morning is a thundering, **“yes, it matters!”** Paul’s argues that if Jesus did not literally rise then you must discard all of

¹ Stephen Hume, “Some may scoff, but they can’t deny the season of resurrection” *The Vancouver Sun*, April 10, 2009, A1.

Christianity. Paul says that if Jesus did not rise then five disastrous consequences result.

- So as we trace these five practical areas, Paul's aim and mine, is to show you how the true story of the resurrection meets you when you need it most, how it sustains you in the most practical areas of life. This morning I want you to make the connection between the bodily resurrection of Jesus and real life. I want you not just to affirm it but to apply it.
 - So then, let me give you the five disastrous consequences that result if Jesus was not literally raised, if it is all mere symbolism.

DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE #1

- **(SHOW SLIDE 3) Disastrous consequence #1: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Bible is a useless boldfaced lie. READ 14 - *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.***
 - Paul refers to the apostle's preaching: ***"Our preaching."*** We have this preaching written down for us in the Bible. All of the apostle's teaching that we call the New Testament, rests on, and proceeds from, the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead.
 - The apostles preached that Jesus is alive, is reigning as king of all, will one day return, judge all people, set up his kingdom, and give it to all who love Him. But if Jesus did not rise and the resurrection is merely a symbol then all of this is useless information and we should throw out the apostles teaching.
- But it is worse than useless. If Jesus did not rise then Paul says the apostle's teaching is a boldfaced lie. **READ 15 - *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.*** If Jesus did not rise then the apostles are not simply sincere but mistaken people who deserve our pity.
 - No, as Paul says, they are boldfaced liars who deliberately made up a story about seeing and touching Jesus and we should utterly reject them.
- Why is Paul asking you to consider if he is a liar? Because Paul knows how hard it is to accept this idea that Jesus literally rose and so he is calling you to think critically and ask yourself, ***"Why in the world would the apostles preach a resurrected Jesus?"*** We talked about this last week.
 - Think about Paul in particular. Here is a man who devoted his life, influence, and massive intellect to suppressing this idea that Jesus rose from the dead. In fact, he was so zealous that he actually had Christians murdered for believing this. Then suddenly, literally overnight, all that zeal that was poured into suppression was poured into preaching that Jesus was alive and all should turn to Him.
 - How do you account for what happened to Paul? Did Paul suddenly grasp that winter becomes spring?

- The same must be asked of the apostles. Remember that they, like Paul, were devout Jews. Jews however were the very last people on earth to believe that an individual man could rise from the dead.
 - More than that, the very height of blasphemy in Judaism would be to worship a man as God. And yet once again, literally overnight, they do exactly this and preach to others to do the same. Paul is challenging you to ask why?
- If you don't believe Jesus rose then the only plausible explanation is that the apostles lied. But as we said last week, people only lie in order to gain something. These men did not gain anything. In fact, they lost what they had.
 - When they preached a risen Jesus they were beaten, run out of town, stoned, and in the end all but one of the apostles were brutally murdered.
 - So if you reject the resurrection you have to give a historical account that explains why hundreds of devout Jews suddenly started worshipping a man as God and lost everything they had including their very lives to preach this.
 - People don't do this because they have insight into how an acorn becomes a forest of oak trees.
- The Bible is not a nice little book with principles on living a good life. It is a book that proclaims news. It broadcasts news that Jesus is alive, that he alone can rescue you, and that your whole life must be shaped by Him.
 - So the first disastrous consequence that results if you do not believe Jesus was raised is that you must consider the Bible to be utterly useless and a boldfaced lie.

DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE #2

- **(SHOW SLIDE 4) Disastrous consequence #2: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, a Christian's reliance on Jesus is worthless. READ 14 - *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.***
 - If Jesus was not raised, then think about how worthless it has been for you to rely on Him to forgive you, save you, love you, care for you, empower you, and carry you through to an eternal kingdom.
 - Oh how worthless all your trust has been. You've trusted a dead man. That's like relying on Julius Caesar or Napoleon to do something for you. How worthless!
- But since Jesus is alive consider how well founded your reliance has been.
 - How can you trust that when Jesus says he will never leave you nor forsake you, you can trust Him to do this? Because he rose from the dead.
 - Jesus said he would rise from the dead, which is the most impossible thing in the universe. He proved himself trustworthy. If He is trustworthy in huge things like that then your trust in Him to care for you is well founded.

DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE #3

- (SHOW SLIDE 5) Disastrous consequence #3: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christians are still condemned for their sins. **READ 17 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**
 - Let me ask you something: how do you deal with guilt over sin? How do you deal with your past? What is that sin you have committed that you would not want anyone to know about? We all have those sins. How do you deal with sins you commit in the present? How do you deal with that accusing voice that says, **“You idiot! You just did what you said you would never do again?”**
 - What do you do with your conscience when you sin? Will it help you to walk down View Street and see the blossoms that are already in bloom? No. You need to be able to connect Jesus’ death and his resurrection to your guilty conscience.
- In his death Jesus paid the debt that you owe for your sins. But it is the resurrection that is God’s receipt to you that Jesus’ payment was accepted.
 - You see if Jesus’ resurrection is merely a symbol then death defeated Jesus. If death defeated Jesus then he has not paid for sin. And if he has not paid for sin then you must pay the penalty that you owe.
 - How do you know for a fact that your sins have been paid in full? Because God raised him from the dead. In raising Jesus, God was giving his receipt that Jesus’ payment for our sins was satisfactory.
- A few years ago I got a reassessment letter for my taxes from Revenue Canada. It was one of those letters that, although not accusing me of fraud, certainly strikes fear in the heart. Revenue Canada said that I owed them a few thousand dollars because the amount I claimed for my charitable donations did not match my receipts. The letter went on to say that if I did not provide the receipts immediately bad things would happen to me.
 - Now do you think I fell into great fear over this? Do you think I lost sleep over this? That all depends on one thing doesn’t it? Are there receipts that prove I paid each charitable organization in full? If not, I have great reason to fear but if they exist I can sleep at night.
- Well I knew that I was honest on my taxes but when I phoned my financial advisor he said he had no record of them and that I should check at home. I tore the house apart but could not find them. I had foolishly not made copies that I could quickly pull out. I did start losing sleep. After a few weeks of anxiety my financial advisor called and said he found them – they had simply been wrongly filed at his office. What a relief! I was so happy.
 - With my receipts in hand I was bold and free and could say, **“Be gone Revenue Canada! I don’t owe you anything!”**
 - A receipt is hard proof that everything is paid in full.

- That is how Jesus' resurrection relates to his death. His death is the payment for sin and his resurrection is the receipt, the hard proof that God fully accepts that payment and our sins have been dealt with. So you see if Jesus was not raised then his work at the cross did not pay your debt and you must still face the penalty that you owe for your sins.
 - But oh, let the good news of verse 20 sink into your soul. **READ 20 - But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.** The cross *secures* forgiveness and the resurrection *assures* forgiveness.
 - So never let the resurrection simply be a point of doctrine. It is so easy to affirm it but do you apply it and let it have its effect on your soul?
- Let me show you how to do this. When your conscience, or the devil, comes screaming at you that you are guilty, that you deserve God's judgement and displeasure you must say, **"Oh yes, you are right. I do deserve it for I have sinned. However, the gospel says that Jesus died for my sins."** But then the devil, or your conscience, may say, **"Can you be so sure that this is enough? Your feelings are telling you right now it is not enough."**
 - What will you say then? If at this point the resurrection is merely a receipt filed away somewhere in the back of your mind you will fall into anxiety and doubt wondering if it is enough or if you need to contribute something that will help God forgive you. But when you see how the resurrection is God's receipt for the cross then you keep that receipt in your front pocket.
 - When your conscience is screaming, the devil is accusing, and all your feelings make you think God rejects you then pull out the hard evidence.
 - Shout at the top of your lungs, **"Jesus rose from the dead, which means God fully accepts his death as payment in full for my sins. I am no longer in my sins but am free. Get lost accusing thoughts. Trouble me no more!"**
- The gospel is such good news because it frees us from our consciences. If Jesus did not rise and this is mere symbolism how will you deal with your conscience?
 - Do you really think it will help your conscience to meditate on bears coming out of hibernation with new cubs?

DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE #4

- **(SHOW SLIDE 6) Disastrous consequence #4: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, all deceased Christians will perish eternally.**
 - This is actually Paul's main point in this section. There were some in the Corinthian church who could not accept this idea that one day God will raise all who love Jesus and give them resurrection bodies. Maybe the future resurrection is also just symbolism. **READ 12 - Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?** But Paul says this is utterly irrational for a Christian to think like

this. Why? **READ 13 - But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.** Or again in verse 16. **READ 16 - For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.**

- And if Christ has not been raised then logically we are still in our sins, which means those who have died in trusting in Jesus to save them have trusted in vain. They have in fact perished. **READ 17-18 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** To perish, or be lost, is more than physical death. It means to come under the wrath of God and face eternal judgement.
- When someone you love is a Christian and they die tragically how do you emotionally deal with this?
 - Or how do you deal with the fact of your own impending death? In our culture people avoid talking about death. It is awkward and hard to face. But not for the Christian. The Christian can look death straight in the eye and not look away. How do you do this? Not by celebrating the fact that the winter rains of Victoria will soon turn into sunny spring days.
 - You pull out your receipt. What does it say? **READ 20-22 - But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**
- The logic is so simple: since God raised Jesus from the dead, he can and will raise all those who trust in Jesus from the dead. God could have simply said, **“Trust me when I say that you will rise to live forever.”** That would be enough. But he goes far beyond that. He gives us hard proof. He raised Jesus from the dead as the historical precedent for what will happen to all who love Jesus.
 - Oh this is hope for you who grieve! This is hope for our souls as we consider our own death! Death is defeated.
- Dr. W. A Criswell, the late pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, tells how he sat next to a well-known theologian on an airplane. The man told Dr. Criswell about how he had recently lost his young son.
 - The theologian said he had come home from school with a fever and they thought it was just one of those childhood things. But it was a very powerful form of meningitis. The doctor said they could not save his little boy. He would die.
- And so this seminary professor, loving his son as he did, sat by the bed to watch his death vigil. It was the middle of the day and the little boy whose strength was going from him and whose vision and brain was getting clouded said, **“Daddy, it’s getting dark isn’t it?”** The professor said to his son, **“Yes son it is getting dark, very dark.”** He said, **“Daddy, I guess it’s time for me to go to sleep, isn’t it?”** He said, **“Yes, son, it’s time for you to go to sleep.”**

- The professor said the little boy had a way of fixing his pillow just so, and putting his head on his hands when he slept. The boy fixed his pillow and laid his head on his hands and said, ***“Good night Daddy. I will see you in the morning.”*** He then closed his eyes in death.
 - Dr. Criswell said the professor didn’t say any more after that. He just looked out the window of that airplane for a long time. Then he turned back and he looked at Dr. Criswell with tears streaming down his cheeks. And he said, ***“Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait for the morning.”***
- Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4, ***“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who have fallen asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”*** How do we have hope in the midst of grief?
 - In the next verse Paul writes, ***“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him...and so we will be with the Lord forever.”***
 - Disastrous consequence #4 is not true. Deceased Christians will not perish. Because Jesus rose from the dead, morning is coming. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we also will be raised.

DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE #5

- **(SHOW SLIDE 7) Disastrous consequence #5: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christians are to be pitied as fools for wasting their lives. READ 19 - *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.***
 - Paul is going to explain this later in the chapter but he is saying that if this life is all there is then all the sacrifices, risks, and suffering he has endured for Jesus is a waste of time and he is a fool.
- Without the resurrection Christians are absolute fools. We sacrifice a lot of time that could be used for sleeping or relaxation in order to read, pray, and study the Bible. We sacrifice a lot of money that could be used for more nicer houses, better cars, and more vacations and we give it to churches, missionaries, and causes.
 - We sacrifice Sunday mornings and other nights that could be used for all sorts of things to gather in worship God.
 - Listen, if Jesus did not rise, and this life is all there is, then we should be pitied for wasting our time and not squeezing out of life all the pleasure that we could. But Jesus did rise. And God raised him we are assured of the fact that he will also raise us. This means that our lives must be lived in light of eternity, not just our short eighty years on earth. This is why we gladly use our lives, our time, and our money for Christ.

CONCLUSION

- I was buying a pair of jeans awhile and had N.T. Wright’s huge book on Jesus’ resurrection with me. The cashier saw it and said, ***“what are you reading?”*** I told her it was a book about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - That abruptly ended the conversation. But as I took my jeans I said, ***“I find it to be a critical topic. If Jesus rose from the dead, then it changes everything.”***