

“A RESURRECTION LIKE HIS.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 6:1-11

Prayer: Holy Father, our whole salvation depends on our true understanding of your holy Word. By the present power of your Holy Spirit, would you free us from worldly thoughts and distractions, and enable us to hear and understand your Word with faith and desire to live by it in newness of life, for the sake of Jesus our risen and redeeming Savior. Amen.

Introduction.

Since we have been preaching through Paul’s letter to the Romans, I chose for our text this morning the only passage in Romans that speaks specifically to the resurrection.

There are four facts in our text about the resurrection, that if you really think about it, are stunning, staggering, astonishing, in a word breathtaking.

Here are *four facts from our text about the resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Two absolute certainties followed by two conditional certainties.

“Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” Verse 4

“Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.” Verse 9

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” Verse 8

“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Verse 5

“Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” Verse 4

A resurrection is a stunning fact, especially since it is so rare. You would expect there would be a lot of attention given to it, especially since there has only been one true resurrection. Paul relates it this way in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 15:3-8 I delivered to you as of *first importance* what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are

still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

The facts surrounding the resurrection are well documented. First of all, they were told well in advance. The prophets in the OT gave a heads-up as to what would happen. Read Isaiah 53. Then there is the testimony of the women, of the disciples, the eyewitnesses. There are all the miraculous events, the stone rolled away, the empty tomb, the angels, the burial clothes left behind, something what wouldn't have happened if His body had been stolen.

There is finally the Word of God, the four separate Gospel accounts, and of course the radically changed lives and willingness to die for this truth. Especially such an anti-Christian hater like the Pharisee Paul who saw the resurrected Jesus. People don't give their lives for lies.

How do you explain the expansion of the Gospel and the church of Jesus Christ?

“Over 2000 years ago a middle eastern man claiming to be God was killed in a barbaric form of capital punishment leaving behind a handful of followers, most of whom had deserted him. Now over 2000 years later, there are little buildings in about every country on the earth where this same man is worshipped as King, little buildings like this one that are thousands of miles from the birthplace of this man and in some of the most remote regions. They can be found in jungles, deserts, forests, valleys, hollers, cities, towns, villages, and on mountains, hills, cliffs, plains, mainlands and islands” (Joseph Spurgeon).

The prophets predicted this. “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

How do you explain this transformation and expansion except by the fact of the resurrection, the most singular and significant event in human history.

“Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.”

“Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.” Verse 9

This is another astonishing fact, unlike any other. Jesus being raised never died again.

There are numerous stories in the Bible of people who were brought back from the dead, but they are resuscitations rather than resurrections. The widow of Zarephath's son raised by Elijah, the little girl and Lazarus raised by Jesus, Eutychus raised by Paul, all of them came back in their old, natural, mortal bodies. They all continued to experience the trials and sins of this life and grew old and died again.

Only once in history has someone died and been laid in a tomb and then walked out of a tomb and never returned to the grave. Only once. Of the billions of people who have walked on this planet and then died, only once has someone come back from the dead and never died again.

Death has no power over Jesus, it has no authority. The word dominion here is the word for lord, death is no longer lord or master over Jesus. In order to truly conquer death and deliver from death all who trust in Jesus, Jesus had to die. He had to go all the way in, and die in order to have the power and authority to defeat and destroy death. Jesus went in and opened the door from the inside for all who are in Him and die in Him. He has the keys. Jesus is now lord and master over death.

Revelation 1:18 I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” Verse 8

This is yet another staggering fact, but notice it is worded differently. Notice the first two words. It doesn't say “now since” or “now that” we have died. It says “now if” we have died with Christ.

This is where I have to stop and back up to explain the context of our text. Since February we have been preaching through Romans.

In Romans 1-3 we see we have a universal problem. We are all descendants of Adam, whether we are Gentiles or Jews, we are all unrighteous sinners unable to save ourselves and justly deserving God's judgment for breaking His law. Adam rebelled against the Word of God, and death is the universal judgment of God on sin. The wages of sin is death.

Then in Romans 4-5 we will learn there is a universal salvation for the human race accomplished for us by the second Adam, Jesus Christ. We are justified with God by the perfect righteousness of Jesus and our sins are covered by the abundant and abounding gift of God's grace.

So if all are condemned in Adam and if all are saved and justified in Christ, then we are all good to go. Done deal, no more worries. Sin all you want and let grace abound, right?

Paul anticipates this thought with his rhetorical question, should we go on sinning so grace can abound? He answers in the most emphatic manner. By no means, may it never be, God forbid!

When we are given medicine, it is not for the purpose of making the disease grow and increase. The medicine is given to destroy the disease. When we take an antibiotic it is not to feed the bacteria or make it flourish and grow, it is to kill and destroy the bacteria.

Before justification we are dead in sin, dead in Adam. After justification we are dead to sin, it is dead to us. We are dead to the power of sin to condemn us and freed from the guilt of sin, it has no more power or authority over us. But we still sin so something more is needed.

Romans 6-8 says yes we are set free in Christ, but there has to be another death. First, the death of Jesus *for all sin*, and then our death *to our sin*. Paul asks how can you go on sinning when you are dead to sin? What does that mean, how can we sinners be dead to sin?

This is called sanctification. It is the painful work of God making us more like Jesus, making us holy, because without holiness no one will see God. It is painful because it involves what is called the mortification of our flesh, a constant, continual, daily killing of sin. As the saying goes, be killing sin or it will be killing you.

If we are united with Jesus, we have a covenantal obligation to live like Him. The Christian life is a long life of repentance, of being like the poor soul in the temple who prayed, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner."

So why does Paul say "if you have died with Christ?" Paul is writing to people who claim to be Christians, so why not say since we all have died? Paul knows there are always some in the church who call themselves Christians, who claim to be saved, born again, who have been baptized and made profession of faith and come to church, who have not died.

Paul is saying there are many in the church who thinking they are justified, thinking they are all good with God, are sinning thinking grace will abound, so they don't have to die.

There are those who are not dead to their sin but very much alive to it and keep sinning and then repenting, and pleading for grace, and then going back to their sin.

The question is have we died to sin? Are we dying to our pride, our anger, our lust, our sexual sins, our envy, self-importance, impatience, disobedience and disrespect to their parents, holding on to grudges, withholding forgiveness? Do you have pangs of conscience, do you actually find yourself questioning the true condition of your soul? Do you truly hate your sin and plead with God for mercy and deliverance? Are you using every means possible to kill it, root it out?

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Galatians 6:14 Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

There are always those who don't like crosses, crosses are hard to carry, crosses are painful, crosses always leave scars, crosses always show a battle has been fought, and so we don't like crosses.

“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Verse 5

The word for united here is the word used for grafting. Have any of you ever done any grafting?

A branch is cut off, it is killed, and it is then grafted into a new plant, and its support, its sustenance, if very life from the new plant. When you graft a branch into a tree it becomes a partaker of all that is in the tree, it shares in the death and the life of the tree.

This is the Christian life, being one with Christ. Paul uses the illustration of baptism which is the sacrament for our initiation, of being grafted into Christ, made one with Christ. It is a picture of being buried, and then raised to newness of life, sharing in the death and life of Christ.

Union with Christ means becoming a new kind of people, who are no longer enslaved to sin, but who walk in newness of life.

Union with Christ is a shifting our allegiances, reshaping our identities, altering our desires, it changes everything, it changes our lifestyle, it changes what we love and what we do.

If you claim to be a Christian there must be facts, proof, evidence, fruit that you are united with Christ in His death, that your old self, your flesh is being crucified of all its sins and lusts.

Do you want a resurrection like Jesus? Then you must die, lose your life, take up the cross, be crucified with Christ so that you can be united with in a resurrection like His, where sin no longer reigns or has dominion over us.

Easter is about both getting right with God through justification and becoming new people through sanctification. Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to walk in newness of resurrected life, in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him?

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus* for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Implications and application.

1. Christ rose from the dead. Vs. 4
2. Christ will never die again. He reigns triumphant over death. Vs. 9
3. If you have died with Christ, you will live with Him. Vs. 8

4. If you have been united with Him in a death like His, you will be united with Him in a resurrection like His. Vs. 5

Four stunning, staggering, earth shaking, life changing facts. But there is a problem with facts. They can just lay there and be facts. Like the fact of gravity and breathing.

I said there are four stunning, breathtaking facts in this text. But I don't see anyone gasping for air, I don't see anyone wide eyed and overwhelmed with amazement. Why not?

Here is the difference. When you are watching the news and you hear a story about a tragic accident where someone died. You listen, you hear it, you believe it, there is no reason not to, you accept it as the truth, and then you go on to the next news story. Its just news until it becomes personal, a school shooting, a tourist injured in a foreign country.

Just news until the doorbell rings and a policeman tells you your child has been killed in a tragic accident. The same story, the same news, but it is totally different, more than breathtaking. It is staggering, it is life-changing, you can never be the same again. It's personal.

Our text ends with a command based on these four facts, a command not just to hear these truths as facts, but as life and death realities, that we must take personally, we really are dead to sin in Christ and raised to new life in Christ, partakers of His death and life.

We should never get over the fact that we were sentenced to eternal death for our sin, but Jesus died for our sin and rose again in power over sin, so that by His power in us we could also.

These facts about the resurrection should be for us like Mary bursting through the door yelling at the disciples, "I have seen the Lord. He is alive. He spoke to me, I touched Him. Christ is risen."

Is the death and resurrection of Jesus that real, that personal, are we are what He has been done for us? We all desire the resurrection, are we willing to go to the cross and die a death like His, dying daily to our sins, so we can be united with Him in a resurrection like His, and be raised to walk in a newness of life like Him, and to the hope of never dying? Christ is risen!

Prayer: Holy Father, you have destroyed the last enemy death, you have defeated Satan, you have vanquished hell, you have raised to life your Son whom you crucified. Enable us, to live in the light and truth and promise of the resurrection. Reorder and reorient our lives around this one central truth, the reality of Jesus' final and decisive triumph over death. Increase in us your resurrection power, strengthen us for the battles ahead. Make this reality practical in all our daily lives, in all our daily interactions and relationships and conversations, to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name we pray, Amen.