

**“STEWARDSHIP OF GOD’S GIFT OF SALVATION:  
HE IS ALIVE!”**

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First Christian Reformed Church  
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**Scripture Texts: I Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-22, 54-58**

**Prayer:** Holy Father, glorify your Son in our hearts and minds through the proclamation of your Holy Word. Preach the truth of the Gospel to our hearts. Grant us a fresh vision of your glory. And merciful Father, grant to me now thought and expression that is worthy of the clarity and excellency of your Word. In the name of Jesus our risen Savior and Lord. Amen.

**Introduction.**

I am not a fan of hip-hop rap music, the style is too fast for my old ears, but there is one excellent Christian exception, Shai Linne. He was an atheist who converted about 20 years ago, became a solid Reformed Christian, and does Christian hip-hop and rap music. One of his raps is called Jesus is Alive in which he powerfully drives home how all the famous people we have ever heard of, all the greatest people in history, all our heroes are all dead.

Nero is dead, Constantine is dead  
Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun are dead  
Alexander the Great is dead

Napoleon and Henry VIII are dead  
Saddam Hussein is dead  
Osama bin Laden, Idi Amin.

Elvis is dead, Picasso is dead  
Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin are dead  
Marilyn Monroe is dead

Princess Di and John Lennon are dead  
FDR, JFK, Ronald Reagan  
Billy Graham, Mother Teresa  
Martin Luther, John Calvin, C.S. Lewis

Plato is dead, Socrates is dead  
Aristotle and Immanuel Kant are dead  
Neitzsche and Darwin are dead

Buddha is dead, Mohammed is dead  
Confucius and Ghandi are dead

Pharaoh is dead, Cyrus is dead  
Darius and Nebuchadnezzar are dead  
Caesar is dead, Herod is dead  
Ananias, Caiaphas and Judas are dead  
Pontius Pilate is dead

In the entire history of mankind, all the prophets, priests and kings, all the poets, preachers and philosophers, all the scholars, academics, and rocket scientists, all the religious leaders, political leaders, business leaders, military leaders, spiritual leaders, all our heroes, all are dead.

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. 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. Only once.

So it makes sense that that one singular event would be a defining moment in all of human history. It makes sense that that one person should have our undivided attention.

If all the chapters of the Bible were a mountain range certain chapters would tower above others. Psalm 23, the shepherds psalm; Isaiah 53, the suffering servant; Matthew 5-7, Sermon on the Mount; I Corinthians 13, the love chapter; and I Corinthians 15, the New Testament's longest and most detailed treatise on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul in this great chapter on the resurrection challenges those who don't believe in the resurrection of the dead and he drives home several points. Let me highlight three.

**I Corinthians 15:3-8 The resurrection is a historically verifiable, eye-witness event.**

Paul states four facts, dead, buried, risen and seen. Seen again and again.

We could bring into the court room the testimony of Job, Abraham and Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and a great cloud of OT witnesses who according to the Scriptures prophesied, predicted and promise, having seen the resurrection by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul starts his list with Peter and then the Twelve and a host of over 500 eye-witnesses, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians.

If 500 people were called to the witness stand, one after another and all their stories lined up and made sense, would you believe them? What court case in history has ever had 500 witnesses? The death and resurrection of Jesus was a public spectacle and a matter of public record.

The resurrection is a historically verifiable, eye-witness event.

**I Corinthians 15:12-22 If there was no resurrection from the dead there is no Christianity.**

Paul in quick succession spells out six irrefutable consequences of a “resurrectionless” Christianity.

All our preaching is futile, our faith is in vain, if what is preached cannot be believed, then faith is worthless. We have lied about God, we are false witnesses. Christianity without Christ’s resurrection is a terrible deception and lie, a whistling past the graveyard.

Worst of all we are still dead in our sins and trespasses, with no way to be forgiven or saved, to have sins atoned for, and God’s just wrath satisfied. Without the resurrection we are homeless in this world with no hope of an eternal home.

All our loved ones who have died have perished forever, and we are of all people the most to be pitied.

If you take away the resurrection you take away all of Christianity. It completely crumbles for lack of any foundation. Christianity is an empty shell.

The entirety of our Christian faith hinges on Jesus rising from the dead just as the Scriptures said and just as Jesus said. Christianity would not have spread if it was based on a lie, on a bunch of cowardly disciples making up a story to cover up a dead Jesus.

The followers of Jesus weren’t stupid, they didn’t ruin their lives and suffer and die for what they knew was a lie. People don’t lay down their life for a dead liar. If Jesus didn’t rise, He is a false teacher, a false preacher, a false prophet worthy only to be stoned to death, not worshipped and believed. Christianity spread because of the passion of hearts enflamed with the certainty of the resurrection.

Paul brings this great chapter to a great crescendo. The resurrection is the death of death.

**I Corinthians 15:54-58 The death of death is a game changer, a life changer, cause for worship and faith, and immovable, abounding labor for the Lord.**

The resurrection is the death of death. The same resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead, raises us, the power of the Holy Spirit is alive and at work in us and for us.

[Illustration: D. A. Carson, “How Long, O Lord? Steadying Our Soul in the Midst of the Storm.”

Picture two Jews the day before the first Passover having a discussion in the land of Goshen, and Smith says to Brown, “Are you a little nervous about what’s going to happen tonight?”

Brown says, “Well, God told us what to do through his servant Moses. You don’t have to be nervous. Haven’t you slaughtered the lamb and dobed the two door posts with blood—put blood on the lintel? Haven’t you done that?”

“Of course I’ve done that. I’m not stupid. But, it’s still pretty scary when you think of all the things that have happened around here recently. You know, flies and river turning to blood. It’s pretty awful. And now there’s a threat of the first-born being killed, you know. It’s all right for you. You’ve got three sons. I’ve only got one. And I love my Charlie, and the Angel of Death is passing through tonight. It’s pretty scary, I’m pretty nervous, anxious.”

That night, the angel of death swept through the land. Which one lost his son? The answer of course is: neither.

Because death doesn’t pass over them on the basis of the intensity, or the clarity of their faith or lack thereof, but on the ground of the blood of the lamb.

We defeat sin, Satan and death by the blood of the lamb. That is the ground of our assurance before God. That is the ground of our faith. It’s not the *intensity* of our faith but the *object* of our faith that saves. We overcome by the blood of the lamb. Glory to God and to the Lamb.

I have no other argument! I need no other plea!  
It is enough that Jesus died, and that he died for me!

**I Corinthians 15:54-57** “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The only weapon death has is sin. The wages of sin is death. And sin gets its power from the Law. God’s wrath is only against sin. Take away sin, you take away the wrath of God and death. This is why death could not hold Jesus, He was without sin.

But Christ has conquered our sin and He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law. He has fully satisfied the just and righteous wrath of God against sin, so death has lost all its power. Death is defeated. Thanks be to God for the victory.

Because of this we can mock and taunt death and make fun of its powerlessness. The blood of Jesus protects us from the angel of death.

One of the greatest Christian poets, George Herbert, mocks death in a powerful short poem, “A Dialogue-Anthem.” It’s a dialogue between a Christian and Death. Christian starts.

Christian

Alas, poor Death! where is thy glory? Where is thy famous force, thy ancient sting?

Death

Alas, poor mortal, void of story! Go spell and read how I have killed thy King.

Chr.

Poor Death! and who was hurt thereby? Thy curse being laid on Him makes thee accursed.

Death

Let losers talk: yet thou shalt die; These arms shall crush thee.

Chr.

Spare not, do thy worst. I shall be one day better than before;  
Thou so much worse, that thou shalt be no more.

Come on, death, do your worst. The worst that can happen is death, and all that can do is make me better than I am now, and you will be worse because you will be no more.

George Herbert has another great line where he says, “Death used to be an executioner, but the Gospel has made him just a gardener.” All he can do is plant you, and you finally come up into the beautiful flower that you were meant to be. You’re just a seed, and death just plants you, and then you finally become who you were meant to be.

Only the believer in the resurrection of Jesus Christ can dare to mock death in this fashion. Death couldn’t hold Jesus, it can no longer hold us who believe His blood washes away our sin.

**I Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

At the conclusion of this chapter long defense of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and our own bodily resurrection, Paul draws a conclusion. Therefore in the light of everything he has said about the resurrection, therefore, my beloved brothers, ...

If it is true that if you remove the resurrection Christianity comes crumbling down, just as if you remove the foundation from under a building; so then the opposite is true. If the resurrection from the dead is true, we can live all of this life with the boldest confidence, the surest of hope, the certainty of things to come, and without fear or dread of death or the devil.

We can stand fast against temptation, against guilt and shame, against the countless lies of our world, our culture, our friends and our own conscience.

***There is a negative and a positive response here.*** Let nothing move you away, let nothing throw you off track, let nothing dissuade you. And always abound in the work of the Lord, in the promotion of the truth, of the Gospel. Be salt and light, be witnesses to the life-changing power of the Gospel in your life.

The race is won, don't grow weary. The reward is yours so run with perseverance and joy. Don't lose heart whatever obstacles you may face.

Everything we do as Christians we do in the light of the resurrection. The resurrection impacts everything we do and say. Everything we do and say either confirms or denies what we believe about the reality of the resurrection.

That Christ arose should still send shivers of amazement down our spines. Jesus' resurrection renews everyone and everything He touches. May the renewal of life at Easter bring you new visions of hope, new laughter of joy, greater understanding of faith, and overflowing love and peace.

Therefore, since our sins have been crucified with Christ, let us live like those who have been resurrected. Let us walk in the new life of the Holy Spirit and put to death the sin of the flesh. Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!

**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.