

Friday, we pondered the greatness of Jesus' love for us and power of His blood to save and cleanse us. But Jesus had more in mind. He foresaw what He could make of us, a pure and spotless bride. But He also knew that our transformation would not be complete until we see Him (1 John 3:2ⁱ). Our fallen bodies must be changed as well as our souls if we are to live in the eternal realm with Him (1 Corinthians 15:53ⁱⁱ). That is what necessitated the resurrection we celebrate this morning.

We are locked in a lifelong battle with our old nature. Apostle Paul tells us ¹⁷ *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* Galatians 5:17 That is why we must continually crucify our old nature and yield to the life of the Spirit we received when we were born again. Only the Holy Spirit can liberate us to reject sin and embrace righteousness.

When the Apostle Paul refers to the flesh, he is not talking about our body. Those are two different words in Greek (*sarx / soma*). He described this battle as a war within his members, that is within his body parts (Romans 7:23ⁱⁱⁱ). It is inside our physical body, but it is not our physical body. If the body itself was evil, God would not call it good when He created it (Genesis 1:31^{iv}). Jesus would not have been incarnated. John wrote that the Word became flesh (John 1:14^v). Jesus did not have the fallen nature from Adam within his earthly body. If He did, He would not have been able to take our sins upon Himself and die in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21^{vi}). He would have had to die for His own sins (Romans 6:23^{vii}). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit without Adam's nature.

This was foreshadowed by the requirements for the Passover lamb. The sacrificial lamb had to be spotless, with no blemishes (Exodus 12:5^{viii}). It was to be the best of the best. That was an analogy of the sinless Savior. When John the Baptist said, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29), he was declaring that Jesus was the fulfillment of all those sacrifices of spotless lambs that came before (John 1:29^{ix}; Hebrews 10:4^x). They all pointed to His coming and to His sacrifice to God on our behalf.

That was what was needed to save our souls. When we receive what Jesus did in paying the penalty for our sins and accept His forgiveness, we have placed our faith in His work and not in our failed attempts to be good. We recognize how much we need Him and how weak we are. We could stop there and forever be grateful, but it does not end there. Jesus walked out of His grave! That is what we celebrate today. **Jesus gave us an historical fact to base our faith on.** During His earthly ministry He demonstrated three times by raising the dead to life that He has power over death. No one survived crucifixion. Romans were masters at causing suffering and knew when a body was dead. The spear in Jesus' side made certain of it (John 19:34^{xi}). Roman soldiers did not take chances because an escaped prisoner meant that they would have to suffer the prisoner's sentence. We also have the evidence of the transformation of the disciples. They went from hiding behind locked doors to becoming evangelists and dying as martyrs. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells of the many encounters with the risen Christ including one in which 500 people at one time saw and heard Him (1 Corinthians 15:5^{xii}). The Apostle

Paul even tells us in that same chapter that if Christ did not rise from the dead our faith is in vain, and we are of all people to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:19^{xiii}).

Jesus' resurrection was necessary because the prophecies declared that He will reign forever (Isaiah 9:7^{xiv}). A dead Messiah cannot reign. His resurrection was inevitable because He is one with God the Father who is eternal. His resurrection was important for our salvation because He had to place His own blood on the mercy seat in heaven (Hebrews 9:11,12^{xv}). While that may be a literal event, it is an illustration of what had been accomplished. Between the manifest presence of our holy God over the mercy seat and the Law inside the Ark of the Covenant that condemns us as rebels against Him is the blood of Christ that reconciles us to God. In other words, **His blood has made peace between God's justice and our sin.** I understand that to be the reason Jesus said to Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him as He had to ascend to the Father (John 20:17^{xvi}). John seems to include accounts not mentioned in the other Gospels as he wrote much later than the synoptics. The other Gospel writers record the Lord telling her to tell them to go to Galilee where they will see Him. Putting the two together, Jesus must have ascended to the Father before meeting with the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:15,16^{xvii}).

Jesus told the disciples it was necessary for Him to go away, but that He would send the Helper, the Holy Spirit to be with them (John 16:7^{xviii}). Once the blood was over the mercy seat in heaven between our just God and the Law that condemns us, the Spirit could descend upon those who place their faith in Jesus. If we are in Jesus, God sees us as righteous, a vessel appropriate for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers us to begin growing to be more like Jesus.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, think of how hard it would be for the disciples to believe the amazing promises He spoke to them, promises like returning to take them to the Father's house (John 14:2^{xix}), to share His glory with us (John 17:22^{xx}), receiving a hundred times the blessings we have here on earth (Mark 10:29-31^{xxi}).

The main fear of mankind is death. It is our ultimate dilemma. We fear the pain, the unknown, and the possibility of judgment. The book of Hebrews tells us that **Jesus came to deliver us who were all our lifetime enslaved to the fear of death** (Hebrews 2:14,15^{xxii}). Jesus' resurrection shows us there may be brief pain in the process, but the other side is glorious if we are in Him. Apostle Paul wrote that our light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17^{xxiii}).

Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us (John 14:3^{xxiv}), and that place is going to be free of all the consequences of sin we face in this present life. Victory over death through the resurrection of Jesus is the main proclamation of the disciples (Acts 1:22^{xxv}; 2:24^{xxvi},31,32^{xxvii}; 3:15^{xxviii}, 26^{xxix} etc.). The book of Acts has twenty proclamations of the resurrection as an essential part of the gospel message. Paul even states in Romans 10:9^{xxx} that **we must believe in the resurrection of Jesus to be saved.** Why? Because a dead lord is no lord at all. What does that say about all the other people in history who claimed to be a god? They are still dead, but Jesus is alive! To believe Christ rose is to believe the prophets, the Gospel writers, and the eyewitnesses who read the Gospels in the first century. If it were not true, those who lived in that day would have debunked it and Christianity would not have grown. John the Beloved lived into A.D. 90s testifying to seeing and speaking with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The Roman historian

Tacitus mentions the Christians believed their crucified Messiah was alive.^{xxxi} And since those days, through the centuries people who have placed their faith in Jesus have found His promises to be true.

We know He is alive. He speaks to our hearts. He transforms our lives. He sets those who are enslaved to drugs free. He causes those who are bound in pride to be selfless. He makes the greedy to become generous. He guides us into the destiny He has planned for us, inspires us with insight, and showers unconditional love upon us every day. We find in Him gracious forgiveness when we stumble, and power to overcome our past. He breaks generational curses and gives us promises of blessing for our descendants. He is an ever-present help in times of trouble, a soothing balm when our soul is wounded. We even find Him to be our physical healer, the Great Physician. He is our shield and defender, a refuge from the storms of life, our King, our groom, the lover of our soul. He is our Beloved. There is none kinder, none more gracious or generous, or loving, or tender, and yet none is more powerful. We are always filled with a future hope ¹⁴ *knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.* 2 Corinthians 4:14 And wonder of wonders is that He says He is ours and we are His (Hebrews 8:10^{xxxii}).

Without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no hope for mankind. Some people believe we just cease to exist. What is the point of life then? Some people think we become spirits floating around this world. But I would ask for what purpose? Are we just to influence people who also become ghosts? And if karma ascendance and being good influences are the purpose of mankind, why do we not see the world becoming kinder and more empathetic and altruistic? Instead, we see the calendar becoming a marker for man's atrocities: 9/11, December 7th, August 6th, and October 7th to name a few. If our loved ones who have passed are no more, it seems to lessen the value of all relationships. We live for this short time, we grow old and die and that is it. How sad. **The resurrection of Jesus offers hope!** A new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness permeates the very air we will breathe is only possible through resurrection (2 Peter 3:13^{xxxiii}).

I pity the secular person who thinks this life is all there is. I pity the grief they must feel when a loved one passes. I pity the hopelessness when there is a diagnosis of terminal cancer or some other affliction. I can see how trials of everyday life could seem insurmountable when there is nothing but the here and now.

By contrast, those who believe in the resurrection and the promise that we too will rise have hope in all those situations. We can say of every trial and loss, "This is not the end!" We can say at a graveside, "We will see you soon." We know it is not wishful thinking because Jesus proved His power over death (John 11:25^{xxxiv}, 43, 44^{xxxv}). The thought of our resurrected bodies being made like His glorious body enlivens our hope. That our sins are remembered no more because of the sacrifice of Jesus removes our fear of that coming day. But for the unbeliever, the thought of Judgment Day is frightening. That is one reason they do not want to believe in resurrection.

The Apostle Paul tells us there is a very personal and practical application to resurrection right now. He writes to the Ephesian church, ¹⁶ *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,* ¹⁷ *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,* ¹⁸ *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to*

*which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*¹⁹ *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*²⁰ *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,* Ephesians 1:16-20 Paul was telling the Ephesians how he prays for them. The last thing in the list is that they might know the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe. He explains this power is according to the working of His great might that he worked in Christ when he raised Him from the dead. He says it is immeasurable greatness. Then he repeats the idea by calling it “great might.”

Physicists have studied the Shroud of Turin image and concluded that the power that made the image is greater than any power we are able to put in such a confined space. They came to the same conclusion that Paul did. It was immeasurably great power. And Paul is saying that is the power of God toward us who believe, resurrection power! That is quite a statement. But how many Christians believe there is such a great power toward them? We are often like someone not realizing they have a super power! It is not that we can do whatever we want or leap tall buildings with a single bound, but rather that we can experience resurrection within our soul over and over again. Paul wrote,²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Galatians 2:20 Paul counted his old sinful nature to have died with Jesus on the cross. His life was now the life of Christ. But that did not mean the old nature did not try to take back the reigns of his soul. If the old nature was dead and gone, Paul would not have said that he dies every day (1 Corinthians 15:31^{xxxvi}). Resurrection power enabled Paul to continually put to death his old nature and choose the life of Christ who had indwelt his spirit (Galatians 5:16^{xxxvii}; Colossians 3:5^{xxxviii}).

In other passages Paul calls this resurrection power “life.” That makes sense, especially when we realize that resurrection means the dead will live again. We should also understand that the soul without the indwelling Holy Spirit is presently dead because of sin. We breathe and think and walk around but so do animals. Life in Scripture is much more than that. Jesus declared the He is the way, the truth, and *the life*! Without Christ we are dead in our sins (1 Timothy 5:6^{xxxix}). Jesus told the church in Sardis that they had a reputation of being alive, but they were dead (Revelation 3:1^{xl}). We can see that the Biblical idea of being dead is to be living a life controlled by sin, and to have life is to be controlled by the Spirit.

Paul explains it further in his explanation of life in the Spirit, Romans chapter 8.¹⁰ *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*¹¹ *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* Romans 8:10,11 There is that resurrection power described again as giving us life in Christ right now. I do not think many people are aware of this power that is available to us to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Either we doubt it is not there, or do not realize it is available to us, or we just choose not to allow it to be exerted in us.

We have gathered today to celebrate Jesus’ victory over death and hell (Revelation 1:19^{xli}). We are assured by His resurrection that He will raise our bodies and make them

like His glorious, resurrected body (Philippians 3:21^{xlii}). The Scriptures declare ¹⁴ *And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.* 1 Corinthians 6:14 That gives us hope that the unbeliever does not have. It gives our lives meaning and purpose. The fact that Jesus tells us to lay up our treasures in heaven fills our lives with significance and purpose (Matthew 6:19-21^{xliii}). Resurrection changes every aspect of human life.

Perhaps just as important is that resurrection power is available to us who believe. It is available to daily transform our lives, so that we might be free from bondage to our old nature's fallen desires. Those fallen desires are not only detrimental to our joy and peace but have destructive effects on our bodies. Resurrection power frees us to not only resist those urges but instead to do something of eternal value. That results in joy and peace and is even good for our physical and mental wellbeing. That is because we are doing what God designed us to do.

Resurrection life in us gives our lives meaning and purpose. I was recently listening to cabinet appointees telling how much they appreciated the chance to work with the President. That is nothing compared to the chance to work with the King of kings and Lord of lords. Letting the Holy Spirit direct your life and guide you into the plan God prepared in advance for you is the highest calling you could have (Ephesians 2:10^{xliv}). It may not be glamorous in the eyes of the world, but it is of great value to God. Remember that those Jesus welcomes into His kingdom were those who served others, even the least among us. Jesus said in doing so He counts it as if was done to Him (Matthew 24:34-40^{xlv})!

If you have never surrendered your will to your Maker, you are missing this gracious opportunity to let the Spirit of God touch the world through you. First, we must repent of going our own way and receive the forgiveness that Jesus paid for on the cross. Then we need to **invite the Spirit of God to fill us and use us for God's glory.** It is humbling. It is glorious, and it is the most important decision you will ever make. The Lord wants to fill us with His life, that same power that raised Jesus. This day we celebrate that victory. Why not make today a celebration of His victory in your life and be filled with resurrected power to serve and glorify our Savior?

Questions:

- 1 What has Jesus done for us?
- 2 Is the human body evil? What is evil?
- 3 Why should we believe Jesus was resurrected?
- 4 Do we have to believe in the resurrection?
- 5 Tell of the evidence that Jesus is alive today.
- 6 What is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe?
- 7 What does that power enable us to do?
- 8 What is another word for that power?
- 9 What are the benefits of yielding to that power?
- 10 Have you received that power?

¹ 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

ii **1 Corinthians 15:53 (ESV)**

⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

iii **Romans 7:23 (ESV)**

²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

iv **Genesis 1:31 (ESV)**

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

v **John 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

vi **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

vii **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

viii **Exodus 12:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,

ix **John 1:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

x **Hebrews 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

xi **John 19:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

xii **1 Corinthians 15:5-6 (ESV)**

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.

xiii **1 Corinthians 15:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

xiv **Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

xv **Hebrews 9:11-12 (ESV)**

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

xvi **John 20:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

xvii **Luke 24:15-16 (ESV)**

¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

xviii **John 16:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

xix **John 14:2 (ESV)**

² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

xx **John 17:22 (ESV)**

²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,

xxi **Mark 10:29-31 (KJV)**

²⁹ And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

³⁰ But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and

children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

³¹ But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

^{xxii} **Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

^{xxiii} **2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

^{xxiv} **John 14:3 (ESV)**

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

^{xxv} **Acts 1:22 (ESV)**

²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

^{xxvi} **Acts 2:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

^{xxvii} **Acts 2:31-32 (ESV)**

³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

^{xxviii} **Acts 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

^{xxix} **Acts 3:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

^{xxx} **Romans 10:9 (ESV)**

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

^{xxxi} Roman historian Tacitus mentioned the belief of early Christians that Jesus had risen from the dead in his work *Annals* around 116 AD.

^{xxxii} **Hebrews 8:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

^{xxxiii} **2 Peter 3:13 (ESV)**

¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

^{xxxiv} **John 11:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

^{xxxv} **John 11:43-44 (ESV)**

⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”

⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

^{xxxvi} **1 Corinthians 15:31 (ESV)**

³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!

^{xxxvii} **Galatians 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

^{xxxviii} **Colossians 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

^{xxxix} **1 Timothy 5:6 (ESV)**

⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

^{xl} **Revelation 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

^{xli} **Revelation 1:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

^{xlii} **Philippians 3:21 (ESV)**

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

^{xliii} **Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)**

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

^{xliv} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

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

^{xlv} **Matthew 25:34-40 (ESV)**

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’