

This morning we are gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. It's much more than a religious tradition! It is a historical fact with profound implications. We all face one great problem. Science is extending life a little longer with each generation, but there is no doubt that we will die. Death is our biggest problem. Wouldn't you agree? If Jesus conquered death, then He must have the answer to our biggest problem.

Now you might think Jesus' resurrection is a fabrication. If it is, it is one of the most well documented fictions of the first century. People staked their lives on it being true, including the authors. (Yes, the authors wrote shortly after Jesus' ascension – see TLCs Eyewitness To Jesus) Do you really think the fishermen and a tax collector that followed Jesus could have hid his body from the powerful Roman military and the ruling religious leaders? That takes faith to believe! It would seem to me that it would take more faith to believe they made up a story and gave their lives up for their lie, than it would to believe the story is true. Their eyewitness account of the resurrected Jesus was the theme of their preaching from 50 days after Jesus was crucified (Acts 2:32; 4:10) to the day they were martyred.

I find it hard to reconcile the skeptics' respect for the man, Jesus, with their lack of respect for the record of those that Jesus chose to convey the message. Was Jesus a great man who was before His time, but with a total lack of discernment in choosing followers? Or would anyone say Jesus was a poor communicator so that His followers misunderstood His message? (2Peter 1:16) Not likely!

Therefore, if the resurrection we celebrate this morning was indeed real, then what did His followers say it meant? Paul the Apostle claimed it meant verification that Jesus would be the One to judge mankind at the Day of Judgment. (Acts 17:31) He wrote that it declared in power according the Spirit of holiness that Jesus is the Son of God. (Romans 1:4) He also wrote that Jesus delivered up for our transgressions and was raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25)

Someone recently asked me what "raised for our justification" meant. I had to admit I hadn't thought about it much. After considering the whole counsel of God, I see that it means that after dying as a sacrifice in our place and for our sins, God showed the sacrifice was accepted by raising Him to the His right hand where Jesus intercedes on our behalf. (Hebrews 7:25) The death and resurrection of Jesus are equally important. If He had died and never been raised, how could we be sure His sacrifice was accepted? How could we be sure that He could raise us from the dead, or that His sacrifice made us worthy of being raised? It is because He sits at the right hand of the Father with the proof that our sins are paid. Just as the Jewish High Priest brought the

Commented [notes1]: Acts 2:32 (ESV)
³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Commented [notes2]: Acts 4:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.

Commented [notes3]: 2 Peter 1:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Commented [notes4]: Acts 17:31 (ESV)
³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Commented [notes5]: Romans 1:4 (ESV)
⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Commented [notes6]: Romans 4:25 (ESV)
²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Commented [notes7]: Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)
²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

blood of the sacrificial lamb into the Holy of Holies before the presence of God, so Jesus, our great High Priest was raised to God's very presence with evidence of the full payment for our sins. (Hebrews 7:27)

But resurrection is not just a promise for the day we die, though it certainly is that. (2Corinthians 4:14) It is the power that is available to us to live a new life today. Listen to Peter's introduction to his letter. ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV) Paul expressed the same idea when he wrote that we might know ... *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 1:19-20 (ESV)

The Apostles were teaching that if we associated ourselves with Jesus in His death then we were also to associate ourselves with Him in His resurrection. (Romans 6:5) That is in the future, but also a present reality. The power that raised Jesus is active in our lives to make the new birth a daily reality. The old self died with Jesus on the cross. The new creation is of the resurrected Christ. (2Corinthians 5:17) We have the power to live transformed lives. We don't have any excuses because we can say "No!" to sins' enticements. We got the power! And that too is proof that the resurrection of Jesus is real. (Romans 6:1-2) How else do you explain the drug raddled atheist filled with joy and walking in holiness? Resurrection power transformed the person. The power that raised Jesus got into them and they became a new creation.

The Apostle Paul declared that he had given up everything he once had pride in so ¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹ *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* Philippians 3:10-11 (ESV) He wrote of resurrection twice in these verses. The first is to know the power of resurrection in his daily life. Then it was to share in His sufferings, become like Him in His death, and then to attain to resurrection from the dead. These verses clearly show us the two different applications of resurrection in the believer, daily, and the final bodily resurrection.

One of my favorite verses on this subject is Romans 8:11(ESV). 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.* Much of my life I read this as speaking of the resurrection of our bodies one day. Then about 15 years ago it dawned on me that this is a present reality. There are a number of

Commented [notes8]: Hebrews 7:27 (ESV)

²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

Commented [notes9]: 2 Corinthians 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

Commented [notes10]: Romans 6:5 (ESV)

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Commented [notes11]: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

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

Commented [notes12]: Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

overlapping metaphors in Scripture regarding this indwelling life. We talked about the blood of Jesus being a cleansing agent continuously at work in our soul of which communion is a regular reminder. We have the vine and branch analogy. We have the building in which God lives picture. (Ephesians 2:22) This verse, Romans 8:11 is perhaps the clearest expression of this truth.

Commented [notes13]: Ephesians 2:22 (ESV)

²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

If... and that, as they say, is a big if, the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you... In the next chapters of Romans, chapter 10, Paul will tell us that to be saved, to have the Spirit within you, you must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. (10:9-10) How can you have the power of resurrection living in you when you don't believe in it? You can't. You have to take a step of faith, but as I said at the beginning of the message, it is more reasonable than doubt.

Commented [notes14]: Romans 10:9-10 (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.

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

If He is Lord and you believe in the resurrection then *he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies...* This is where I went wrong. I was thinking life to my dead body someday. That's not what it says. Jesus taught that He is life. (John 14:6) In other words, if Spirit that raised Jesus is living in us, He will give our body life, which is Jesus. We can obey the Spirit. We can say yes to God and no to sin. You and I can become instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6:12-13) We can begin this adventure of letting the Spirit guide us daily.

Commented [notes15]: John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [notes16]: Romans 6:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

How is that possible? The verse concludes, that it is *through his Spirit who dwells in you.* Paul writes in the same chapter that if we don't have His Spirit then we don't have Christ. (Romans 8:9) If you have Christ, if you have confessed that Jesus is the Lord of your life, and believe God raised Him, then you are sealed by His Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13) If you yield to Him, then you can experience that power that raised Jesus directing you.

Commented [notes17]: Romans 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Commented [notes18]: Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Here's another verse that is just as clear. ¹⁵ *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* 2 Corinthians 5:15 (ESV) It was not only for our sake that He died, but also it was for our sake that He was raised. As we saw earlier, He is raised to the right hand of the Father and is interceding for us. He's telling the Father our sin is covered and the penalty is paid in full. He's asking the Father to work through us in the situations we encounter. He's directing the Spirit to pray in and through us so that we are a part of bringing God's will into the earth. He's continually helping us to let go of living for self that we might live for Him.

That would sound selfish of God, if we didn't understand that living for Him is the most exciting and blessed life you can possibly live. Because He is unselfish, to live for Him is

to live for love and righteousness. It's to live to advance God's kingdom in the earth. He died and was raised so that we could be partakers of His divine nature. (2Peter 1:4)

Commented [notes19]: 2 Peter 1:4 (ESV)

⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Here is one more verse that explains that baptism is a picture of dying with Jesus and presently raised to experience this powerful new transformed life. ¹² *having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* Colossians 2:12 (ESV) I have some practices that remind me to walk in the Spirit and help me have faith in resurrection power in my life. One of them is to remind myself that I died with Jesus. When my selfish nature tries to rise up, I tell myself, "Dead men don't care if they get their way." When we were baptized, we were declaring that truth to everyone in a picture form. We were declaring that we were buried with Jesus and raised to newness of life. Last week's sermon covered that verse that was sung at baptisms, "*Awake O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*" (Ephesians 5:14)

Commented [notes20]: Ephesians 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

You were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God.. We believe that God raised Jesus and so we believe that by faith in Him, we too are born again, raised to a new life in Him. We believe by faith that that power that raised Jesus is available to transform us and empower us to walk in newness of life every day.

So what exactly did Jesus' disciples believe about the resurrection? They believed that it was the verification that Jesus will be the Judge of all mankind. They believed that it proved He was the only begotten Son of God. They believed that it showed His sacrifice for our sins was accepted by the Father. And they believed that it was proof that we also would be raised from the dead. (1Corinthians 15:14; 20)

Commented [notes21]: 1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

But just as importantly, and perhaps more so for everyday life, was the conviction they held that the resurrection meant that we had the power to live a new life. (Philippians 3:10-11) They were convinced and personally experienced that the Spirit that raised Jesus was living in them and therefore they were living in resurrection power. They knew they were to be dead to sin and alive to God, and that they were no longer to live for themselves but for the One who died for them and was raised.

Commented [notes22]: 1 Corinthians 15:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Commented [notes23]: Philippians 3:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

This is the challenge, isn't it? We can believe that one day we will be raised, and that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice, and that Jesus, the Son of God, will be our Judge. But what changes our life today is the fact that the resurrection means that we who believe can tap into that power to live each day, not for ourselves but for the glory of God. The sacrifice was accepted so that the Spirit could come and empower us, live in us, transforming us into instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6:13)

Commented [notes24]: Romans 6:13 (ESV)

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

I'm speaking to believers in Jesus when I ask you if you are neglecting this power. Do you say you believe in the resurrection but live every day for self? Are you comfortably in control of your life? These Scriptures are telling us there is more. Is it a little frightening? Absolutely! But remember, Jesus said if you save your life you will lose it. (Matthew 16:25) He didn't say you might lose it. You will lose it. It's only in losing your life that you find it.

Commented [notes25]: Matthew 16:25 (ESV)

²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

If you are not a believer in Jesus, perhaps you just attend on Christmas and Easter, I'm glad you are here. It is a great tradition, but it is so much more. You've heard what Jesus' followers understood. This is not a religion; this is a radical life changing transaction. It's your sin for His righteousness. It's a life without lasting meaning for a life of eternal meaning. It's the indwelling of the Spirit that raised Jesus, but it costs everything. It's totally up to you. I'm just the messenger. You have to deal with the One that sent the message. It is a message that hasn't changed for 2000 years. (The Old Covenant message is really the same, concealed in types, shadows, and prophecies.) It's a life altering decision and you better count the cost. (Luke 14:28) It's not easy, but it is way more than worth it. (Mark 8:36-37)

Commented [notes26]: Luke 14:28 (ESV)

²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Commented [notes27]: Mark 8:36-37 (ESV)

³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul?

We usually sing a song of celebration at the close of the Easter message, but this year, I'd like to close with a song of commitment. Maybe it's the first time you've considered Jesus is real and He is serious about a relationship with you. Maybe you have known Jesus, but you've never yielded to that resurrection life, and just brushed it aside, ignoring the voice of the Spirit that has lived in you for so long you can hardly hear Him anymore. Have you lost the song in your heart and the joy of His presence? It's time to come home. Time to start really living in resurrection power! While we sing, come up and kneel on this front step and ask for a renewal of the power of resurrection to no longer live for self but for the One who died for you *and* rose again to indwell you with the power of resurrection!

Questions

- 1 Why should we believe the story?
- 2 What did the Apostles say resurrection meant theologically?
- 3 What does "raised for our justification" mean?
- 4 What does resurrection mean today?
- 5 What is the effect of the Spirit in us?
- 6 What is necessary for the Spirit to live in us?
- 7 For Whom are we to live?
- 8 What is the picture in baptism?
- 9 What power is available to believers?
- 10 Are you applying that power daily?
- 11 Have you made the transaction?