

## **Living in View of the Cross and the Resurrection**

Prior to the Easter message last week we had been talking about living our lives in view of the cross – focusing upon the impact the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ has upon our lives.

This morning, on this first Sunday after Easter Sunday, I want to continue that focus, but adding to it the important dimension of Christ's resurrection. You see, our life is forever impacted by the cross, but all that was accomplished upon the cross was ratified by his resurrection three days later. Now we live our lives in view of the cross and in view of the resurrection. It changes everything for us.

This doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel. It is the Christian faith. It is the message that has been proclaimed from the day of the resurrection on.. Listen to what the risen Christ himself told the disciples on that Easter Sunday. **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’”**  
**Luke 24:44-48**

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central focus of our faith. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”** 1  
**Corinthians 15:1-8**

Does it matter whether Jesus really rose from the grave? Does it matter whether we believe in the resurrection? Yes. Can you be saved without believing in the resurrection? No. Because if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, then he wasn't who he said he was. The words he spoke weren't the truth. Without the resurrection Jesus was just another teacher. The resurrection is the validation of all that Jesus claimed he was and all that he came to do. Jesus, alive and speaking to the disciples, said this is what was written concerning himself: that he would die and rise from the dead on the third day and then repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name. Does it matter whether we believe he died and rose again? Yes, because Paul said we are saved by believing this good news. He died and rose again for us.

Does the resurrection matter? Paul goes on to tell us that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then there is no resurrection for any of us. All of this gospel is just a fairy tale that was made up, there is no life after death, no hope for us and he says if that is the case we are then the most miserable people on the planet. But Paul then assures us that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. He is alive, risen from the grave and because he lives, we know his words are true. Because he lives we know our sins can be forgiven and we can have eternal life through our faith in Christ. His resurrection makes all the difference and hallelujah, we now live our lives in view of the cross and the resurrection.

Those men and women to whom Jesus appeared – Paul mentions that at the time he was writing most of them were still alive – the eye witnesses to the resurrection – they were just ordinary folks - fishermen, tax collectors, tradesmen, housewives, but they saw the risen Lord and they would never ever be the same. They would live their lives in view of the cross and in view of His resurrection.

And we too, by faith, have heard the good news. Jesus is alive, crucified and risen from the grave. We too are living our lives having been changed by the cross and the resurrection, but what does that mean for us?

**Living in view of the cross means we must live a crucified life.** In Matthew 16, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he would be crucified and then three days later be raised to life. This was the occasion when Peter took him aside and rebuked him for speaking like that. “Never Lord. This shall never happen to you!”

Jesus in turn rebuked Peter for having in mind the things of men rather than the things of God. Then Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Matthew 16:24.**

Living our lives in view of the cross means we must live a crucified life. Our choices are not based upon what will please us the most, instead, our choices should be about what pleases God! Living a crucified life means we put God and the interests of the Kingdom of God ahead of our interests. We take up our cross, denying ourselves and following hard after Jesus. It's not a very popular doctrine or teaching today, but it is still the gospel. “Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me” Jesus said. There is only one reason why anyone would take up a cross and that is for the purpose of dying upon it. A crucified life means a life that is dead to self, dead to pride, dead to self-centeredness, dead to self-interest. Instead we purpose in our heart that with every decision, every choice, we will choose to please and honor God and to put Christ first.

The Scripture says, **“You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:20.** You have been purchased at a great price. The crucified life is a life that never forgets the price that was paid. The bible says, **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20**

Living in view of the cross, living the crucified life means surrendering everything to Christ and submitting to his lordship above all else in your life. You aren't your own. You are under obligation to the one who gave his life for you. You owe him your life and your all.

Most of us think, “How can I ever live a life of adequate devotion to the Lord? Where will I find the will power to live a life pleasing to God?” Here is the good news. **Living in view of the cross calls us to a crucified life. Living in view of the cross and the resurrection calls us to an empowered life!**

Jesus doesn't call us to a crucified life and then leave us on our own to depend strictly upon sheer will power to live that life. He promises his power, his help, his anointing, his righteousness, his presence to enable us to live the life that is pleasing to

him. There is more than enough power available to you to help you overcome and be victorious in your walk with Christ. The bible says, **“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”**

**Romans 8:11.** Paul then goes on to explain that if by the power of the Holy Spirit we live that crucified life, then his resurrection power will be at work in us, leading us and helping us make the choices that are pleasing to God. Living our life in view of the cross and the resurrection means we have the resurrection power of Christ to help us live for Christ. We live a crucified life by the power of the risen Christ.

**Living our life in view of the cross means identifying with the weak, the outcast, the powerless, the prisoner, the hungry, the hurting, the last, the least.....**

It's interesting to me that as Christians, we spend a lot of our time trying to avoid having anything to do with the people for whom Christ died. Jesus said the well don't need a physician but the sick certainly do. He came to give himself as a ransom for sinners - for all of us.

As we speak of living in view of the cross, bear in mind what the cross was – a brutal place of execution. That means that perhaps much of the crowd that gathered around Golgotha were criminals themselves coming to lend support to their friends and family members who were being executed. It was a rough crowd that gathered, but that's who was on either side of Jesus as he bled and died upon the cross.

It's all right that the cross is mounted upon the wall of our churches, but we must never forget that the cross was originally lifted up at the crossroads of a sinful world, in the busy marketplace of society, and that is where it must be again.

I believe living in view of the cross should put us in touch with those folks the world doesn't want to touch. Living in view of the cross should move us to care for the people no one else would care for. The broken, the poor, the powerless, the sick, the dying, the prisoners, those forsaken and cast out by everyone else – that's where the gospel steps in - that's where the weakness and the foolishness of the cross links us to all those folks.

Jesus spoke of judging the nations on this criteria, **“I was hungry and you gave**

**me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Matthew 25:35-36**

Jesus lets us know that wherever there are hungry, thirsty, lost, sick, needy, imprisoned, desperate people, he would be there too and he expected that we, his body, the church would be there as well. It's what living in view of the cross will require of us. It's why it has been the church of Jesus Christ over the centuries that has led the way in caring for the outcasts of society, the addicted, the sick, the orphaned, the weak and hurting. Victims of injustice have an advocate in the church. Those without a voice, the weakest, the elderly and the unborn, they have a voice in the church.

Jesus said “the poor you will have with you always.” Jim Wallis interprets that to indicate that Jesus expected wherever there were poor people and hurting people, God's people would be there to help them.

**Living in view of the cross puts us where the broken and hopeless are. But living in view of the cross and the resurrection gives us hope they don't have to stay where they are.** You see, we have this message of hope that says, you may be a sinner condemned to die, but there is one who has already died, who has taken your place and he says you can have eternal life in Christ and in him you can be free.

That resurrection power says God can take you, as Jonathan Gainsbrugh says, from the guttermost to the uttermost. He will reach you where you are, even at the gates of hell and save you and give you the power to be an overcomer, to be more than a conqueror through Christ.

You may have come to church this morning high, or hung-over, or bearing such a load of guilt and shame that you can't hardly stay in this service. But there is hope because of the cross and the resurrection. Things don't have to stay as they've been before. Choose to live your life in view of the cross and the resurrection - where all things are possible, where good news comes to those who seldom hear the good news.

You may be experiencing brokenness in your life. Maybe things have not turned out as you expected – you've found yourself getting crucified by the world, like Jesus you've been betrayed by those closest to you. It feels hopeless, but living in view of the

cross and the resurrection assures us there is hope. It's not over yet. Which brings us to the final thought.

**Living in view of the cross means death comes to all. But living in view of the cross and the resurrection means death no longer has the final word.**

The cross reminds us that suffering and injustice and death are part of the makeup of this world. We aren't likely to escape it. The old folks used to say that everyone has a cross to bear. The Bible says, **"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."** 1 Peter 4:12-13

You may be going through a difficult time, experiencing the pain of the cross you are bearing, but hear me this morning: the cross isn't the final word. It wasn't for Jesus and because of that reality, it isn't the final word for us either. Death hasn't the final say. Not since that Easter Sunday when Jesus rose from the grave.

The cross may remind us of the limitation of our flesh, that we are but dust and we will return to the dust, but the resurrection reminds us of the life giving power of Christ for each of us who walk devoted to him. Jesus suffered on that cross so we might have life. He bore stripes upon his back so we might be healed. His life, death and resurrection makes all the difference for us, yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever.

Live your life in view of the cross and the resurrection. There is power available to live a crucified life, a life of holy dedication and obedience to Christ. There is power to touch the lives of the broken with the hope that is found in the resurrection. There is the good news that death no longer has the final word. The limitations have been lifted off and because of the cross and the resurrection of Christ from the grave I can tell you for certain that all things are possible. The one who was dead is now alive and has the power to do exceeding and abundantly above and beyond anything you can ask or imagine. The bible says, **"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."** Ephesians 3:20-21

The power of the cross and the power of the resurrection are at work in us and nothing will ever be the same again. We are new creations in Christ, crucified with Christ and risen with Christ to do the good works he has ordained for each of us. Let's be faithful as we live our lives in view of the cross and the resurrection.

Do you need his power today? Do you need his touch? Do you need his help? Perhaps he is speaking to your heart about a new commitment to Christ. Maybe he is calling you to a new place of service and ministry, to reach out and touch the hurting and broken around you. Maybe you need the comfort of the Lord as you realize death no longer has the final word. Jesus is alive and his power is available to help you today. If you need prayer, if you need his help, I invite you to come to the front for prayer.