

What a Morning, Indeed!

Job 19:23-27

Mark 16:1-8

I Corinthians 15:20-26

I Corinthians 15:50-58

Revelation 5:11-14

Our Scripture texts this week teach us of the prediction of the resurrection, the actual historical event of Christ's resurrection, the implications of the resurrection, and the future hope of the resurrection.

We have all had experiences from which we would say, "That changes everything." When we receive a very special gift, or when someone loves us, or when there's a need that we must meet — those things change everything. The women who went to the tomb on that first Easter morning 2,000 years ago had an experience that changed everything. Rather than going to honor the dead body of Jesus, to their amazement, they beheld an angel who explained to them that Jesus was not there because He had resurrected. We are told that they were "alarmed," "trembling," "astonished," and "afraid." What they saw and heard changed everything.

Kyle Idleman published a book last month entitled "Aha." The subtitle is "The God Moment That Changes Everything." He explains that when we come to Christ we realize that our whole lives are changed, not by anything we have done, but solely because of what Christ has done for us. This changes everything and leads us to a sudden awakening, brutal honesty, and immediate action. It's like when our alarm goes off at 5:00 in the morning: we are at first stunned and then we begin to figure out that our dreams are not true but that the reality of a new day is upon us. That is exactly what happens when we grasp the meaning of the resurrection. What does this all mean for us? Let us look for a moment at some verses from our epistle lesson.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. **23** But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. **24** Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. **25** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **26** The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"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.

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.

I. By the resurrection, Jesus is proclaimed as Lord.

Notice in verses 24 and 25 that Jesus has defeated every pretender of authority and power and He has taken the reign over all the cosmos. When we believe the resurrection, we realize that Jesus is Lord. Some years ago I led a young man to Christ who said to me after his conversion, “Does everyone in this church know about this?” To a new Christian, the resurrection seems so marvelous that one would wonder if “ordinary church folks” had really gotten the message yet!

II. By the resurrection, Jesus has conquered death.

Obviously, Jesus has conquered His own death but in verses 20-23 we see an important point: Jesus is only the “first fruits” of God’s harvest; that is, we are the harvest that follows. Since we are in Jesus Christ, when He dies, we die; when He suffers, we suffer; and when He is raised from the dead, so are we! This changes everything. We are surrounded by death every day and our heart goes out to those who grieve over the loss of loved ones, but the Apostle Paul can speak back to death and ask the amazing question, “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?” (vs. 55).

III. By the resurrection, Jesus has restored meaning to life.

Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous existentialist, said on one occasion, “The only question remaining for humankind is ‘Why not commit suicide?’” Human life without an answer for death makes all of life meaningless, and, indeed, we struggle with why we should even both to stay alive. But, as David Garland said in his commentary, “The message of Jesus’ resurrection transforms a hopeless end into an endless hope.” Paul says in verse 58 that we must be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.” Because of the resurrection, everything that we do is significant to the Lord and to others.

One would ask now how we can we experience the “a-ha” moment of the resurrection of Jesus? The answer, actually, is quite simple. In Romans 10: 9, Paul says, “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.” It’s as simple as that. We believe in the resurrection, not just in our minds, but in our hearts. That means that we lean on the resurrected Jesus, we trust the resurrected Jesus, we order our lives around the resurrected Jesus. We must be convinced of the actual historical event of Christ’s resurrection (look at John Stott’s “Basic Christianity” on the resurrection) and we must all also cultivate a devotion to His and our resurrected life. You may think that your life has been too corrupt for the Lord to consider you, but take a look again at Mark 16:7 where the angel says to the women, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter...” Why did the angels add “Peter” when we all know that Peter is already one of the disciples? The answer is that Peter, as an abject coward, massively failed the Lord and publicly denied Him three times, and would assume that he was disqualified for future service. The angel made it absolutely clear that Jesus Christ would restore Peter. He will restore you too. What a morning, indeed! It changes everything.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it that many church-going folks never experience the “a-ha” moment of Christ’s resurrection?

2. Why do you believe in the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ? What have been the greatest challenges to your belief? How have you answered those challenges?

3. How does belief in Christ's resurrection change our experience at a believer's funeral?

4. What are the "labors" that we should be performing steadfastly and immovably until the end of life?

5. What are the most significant changes to take place in a believer's life when the "a-ha" moment occurs?

Going Deeper

1. Is there any way in which you have believed in the resurrection only intellectually and not with your affections and your will? How would your life change if both your will and your affections were also engaged in your faith in Christ's resurrection?

2. What is it about the future resurrection of the believer that causes you at times to doubt? How can you address those doubts effectively?