

## **1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

**Now if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how is it that some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is pointless, and your faith is pointless too. <sup>15</sup> Then we are even guilty of giving false testimony about God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it were true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then it also follows that those who fell asleep in Christ perished. <sup>19</sup> If our hope in Christ applies only to this life, we are the most pitiful people of all. <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

Dear children of our heavenly Father. Amen

How many of you like to read books? If you like to read books, what kind of book reader are you? Are you the type of reader who once he starts a book finds it hard to put the book down? Are you one of those readers who reads the last couple of pages to see how it all works out before you start reading the actual book? Do you like mysteries or action packed books? There are many kind of readers and there are more kinds of books that we can enjoy reading.

Today as we hear from the words that the Apostle Paul wrote down for the Christians living in Corinth, we see the Apostle Paul writing down words for us that are a part of God's story. God's story as Paul was recording it for us as Christians is a great story, but I think that some people just don't understand the story that God is telling. Many people seem to get bored with God's story and never quite finish reading the story. Others kind of jump around in God's story and never really understand the full flavor of God's story. Today as we look at God's story – his story of the saving of mankind, we are especially reminded about the ending part of God's story. Too many people remember real clearly what Jesus did on the cross as he gave his life for the world's sins, but too many people also seem to think that the story ended on that Good Friday. Today we are going to once again see that Jesus' death would not be a good end, but that Jesus' resurrection from the dead would be the perfect beginning. That is why we are going to use a theme that will emphasize the resurrection of Jesus and what that resurrection means for us:

### **Theme: Christ's Resurrection Is Important!**

- 1. Without Christ's resurrection we face a hopeless end**
- 2. With Christ's resurrection, we have an endless hope**

One of the tools that was and is still used to help young children learn is connect the dots. As we know this is a picture that is made up mostly of dots that are either marked with the letters of the alphabet or numbers. As you connect the dots in order the picture begins to gradually appear. Only when the picture is fully complete can you see the exact picture. Paul in our text was calling attention to a very disturbing situation in the city of Corinth. The Corinthian Christians were not connecting the dots between Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the resurrection from the dead of believers. As our text points out there was a

serious problem with some of the people about the resurrection of the body after death., “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? It was not uncommon for people living around that time and people living today to believe that once the body dies that it just goes into the ground to decay forever. They cannot believe that something could come from this lifeless body. There is no way that this body will come back to life when Jesus returns. They refused to connect the dots that Jesus showed his power even over death by his rising from the dead.

Paul realized the seriousness of this problem and addressed it head on. Paul as well as the other preachers of God’s Words preached the gospel message of Jesus -- the death and resurrection of Jesus the Savior of the world. If it is a fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. If it is a fact that Jesus’ human body was dead and came to life again. If Jesus who promised to die and come back to life after three days told the truth. If all these things are true, how can you say that those who die in the Lord will not rise from the dead? If a person refuses to accept the resurrection of those who die, you must also reject Jesus’ resurrection which then follows that you must not really believe that Jesus has power over all things -- death included. Paul puts it this way, **“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”**

If I asked everyone here today how they like their steaks grilled, I might get quite few different requests. Some might like it rare with the blood still dripping. Others might like it more on the well-done side. Others might use terms like medium rare or something in between. We are all able to enjoy our steaks in whatever ways God has created our taste buds. This is not the case when it comes to believing in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Paul points this out by telling us what it would mean if we didn’t believe that Jesus actually died and rose again.

**“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”** It is bad enough that some people might not believe that Jesus’ resurrection is all that important, but think about what this means for our whole faith. What a waste of our time it would be to believe in a Savior who is still dead. Oh, we could all make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and march reverently by the gravesite of Jesus, but what good would that do? What kind of encouragement could we offer to people. It would be a faith with no hope. Everything would be worthless or futile. If there were no resurrection on the third day, the best thing that all Christian preachers could do would be to quit preaching and look for another job.

As Paul put it, **“you are still in your sins.”** Yes Jesus would have died on the cross for our sins. Yes, he would have suffered terribly for our sins, but it would have only been a valiant try if he were still dead. Our lives on this earth would have no meaning, **“Then it also follows that those who fell asleep in Christ perished. If our hope in Christ applies only to this life, we are the most pitiful people of all.”** We would be lost and so would everyone who has died and will die. If we live on this earth for Jesus, but aren’t looking further to our eternal life with Jesus in heaven after we die, then we have missed the point. This earth is not the final goal for us as God’s children. What a pity for those who believe such things.

As we sit here 1 week after Easter Sunday, you might be wondering to yourselves, why are we still talking about Jesus’ resurrection? Isn’t that what we are supposed to talk about on Easter Sunday? Yes, you are right, but Jesus’ resurrection is so important that we need to keep bringing it to our attention often. It is important because it always reminds us of the power and might of our Savior. Jesus was able to conquer death. The preaching that we hear week in and week out is the real deal. Jesus is not dead, but he is a live. Our preaching is not worthless. Our faith is not futile. Our sins are completely taken away and we are living

our lives on this earth with one eye looking towards our eternal home in heaven.

As Paul puts it, **“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** Jesus was the first to raise himself from the dead with the thought being that there will be others who Jesus will raise from the dead after him. This is the guarantee for all those who follow Jesus. As sinful human beings it is a key part of our faith to know that death is not something to be feared, but it is a day of joy as we are taken from this world of sin to our perfect home in heaven. Without the glory that we find in Jesus’ resurrection, our entire Christian faith would be worthless. What would we use to comfort those who had someone die?

Personally this is the hope that will last an eternity. As we confess in the creeds. We believe in Jesus who rose on the third day and ascended into heaven. We confess that he is sitting at the right hand of God and will come again to judge the living and the dead. May we find strength and hope as we live in a world of sin and death by placing our faith firmly on the foundation of Jesus death and resurrection. As we sing almost every Easter, *“I Know that my Redeemer lives, what comfort this sweet sentence gives.”* Isn’t that so true? Most often we find comfort from these types of words when we are comforting those who have been affected by earthly death. I pray that these words from Paul remind us that it is not just some trivial words but these words can and should be used to remind those who grieve that Jesus promised to raise all those who believe in him to eternal life in heaven.

The new craze is to put alternate endings for movies. I always find that kind of silly. Why do we want to know about an ending that they didn’t think was good enough to use as the real ending? Sometimes after you watched the alternate endings, you might say I like this alternate ending better than the real ending, but you know that it doesn’t really matter what you want. As we look at God’s story there is not an alternate ending. There was only one possible ending and that had to be Jesus rising from the dead on the third day. There could be no other ending that would be suitable to our loving and gracious God. May we always recognize the importance of what Jesus accomplished on that first Easter morning. May we draw strength from the words that Jesus died and rose again for my sins. May we find a hope that will never end as we eagerly wait for the day that God calls me home to heaven. Amen