

Subject: God's Good News

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Going to church on Easter Sunday and not hearing about the resurrection of Christ would be like going to the Super Bowl and not having a football game. Easter Sunday is all about the risen Lord. In fact, every Sunday is all about the risen Lord. That's why we call it "the Lord's Day."

The resurrection is important for many reasons. Christ based His claim to be the Son of God and Messiah on the resurrection. He gave them the sign of the prophet Jonah. He said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days." He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." All these would be phony claims if not for the resurrection. The apostle focused their preaching on the risen Christ. Without the resurrection salvation would not be provided, and without believing in the risen Christ salvation could not be received. A dead Christ can save nobody, but a risen Christ can and will save all who trust in Him. This is the basic truth of salvation:

- ***Romans 10:9-10***⁹ *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*
¹⁰ *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

We hear a lot of bad news these days because we live in a sinful, fallen world. How thankful we should be for the Gospel, the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. You can't really appreciate the good news until you realize the bad news. A struggling farmer went to meet with his banker. He said, "I've got good news and bad news. The bad news is that I can't pay that loan for my tractor. There's more bad news...I can't pay what I owe for seed and fertilizer. I can't pay what I owe you on my house mortgage either. But there is some good news...I'm still going to do my banking with you."

WHAT IS THE BAD NEWS?

The bad news is that all have sinned. ***Romans 3:10*** *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* ***Romans 3:23*** *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* The bad news is that sin brings death and separation from God. ***Romans 6:23*** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The bad news is that sin affects everything. Like Humpty-Dumpty, we can't put the pieces back together again. We live in a sinful world. We are unable to reverse the curse. We have a sinful nature. We are unable to change ourselves. We are dead in sin. We are unable to save ourselves.

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS?

The good news is all about Jesus and what He has done. The good news is that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. The good news is that Christ was buried and then rose from the dead according to the scriptures.

The good news is that this is a fact verified by witnesses (notice how Christ "was seen" after His resurrection, vs. 5-8). The good news is that Christ died and rose so that we might be forgiven and live with Him forever. He died for our sins. He rose to guarantee our resurrection (vs. 20-22). This whole chapter is about resurrection: first, the resurrection of Christ, and then our resurrection to be like Him.

- **The Good News is that Christ did something for us so that He might do something in us so that He might do something through us.**

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

To people lost in sin and unaware of all this it makes no difference at all. They live as if this good news never happened. They know they have problems and the world has problems, but they try to make the best out of a bad situation. They draw their breath and they draw their salary, live for the weekend or the next holiday, and try to find as much happiness as they can. But most of the time they feel empty on the inside and think there must be more to life. Such is the miserable life of lost people.

To people who are saved and changed by the grace of God the good news of Christ's death and resurrection makes all the difference. In fact, it is THE difference between them and lost people. The Gospel is the difference between life and death, between hope and hopelessness, between holiness and sin, between victory and defeat. That's why the Good News of Christ is so important.

For this reason we have a responsibility to share the Gospel and to receive it by faith. The Gospel was nothing new to these Corinthians. Paul was just as committed as ever to preaching and teaching and reminding them of the Gospel. Notice the words in verses 1-3, 11: "I declare (*gnorizo*, make known)...I preached (*euaggelizo*, announced)...you received (*paralambano*, took, welcomed)...in it you stand...by it you are saved (are being saved)...I delivered what I received...we preach...you believed." Paul and other preachers didn't design it; they just delivered it. They were not editors who made up the story. They were just the delivery boys, the messengers who told what they knew.

All of these words indicate a responsibility and response of every believer. And right in the middle (vs. 22) there is a warning. We must keep in memory (hold on to) the Gospel (*katecho*, hold firm). We must cling to the Gospel and get a firm grip on it with our hearts, and make sure it is not a shallow, phony profession of faith. Here's the point: the Gospel will change our life and save our soul IF we let it, IF we truly believe it, IF we really embrace it and take it to heart. Otherwise Paul says we believe "in vain" (*eike*, without purpose). The Gospel has a purpose.

- **Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.**

Jesus died and rose for a purpose, a reason and that purpose is to change our lives forever. It is the difference of believing in purpose and believing in vain. One is life-changing; the other leaves you the same. One leads to life; the other to Hell. One produces spiritual fruit; the other bears no fruit. One gives real hope; the other gives false hope.

We come into the house of God on Easter Sunday, sit and hear the Gospel message in song and are moved, hear the Gospel message in word and agree that it's true, but the real proof and the only proof that we actually believe the Gospel and take it to heart is how we live outside the church. As one person said, "If your religion hasn't changed your life, you had better change your religion because it's not the saving kind." Some of us recently heard about the spiritual condition of people in Turkey, a country that almost entirely Muslim. It was said that 95% of the people are Muslim in name and tradition only. I wonder if the same could not be said about 95 % of the Christians in America.

- **The Gospel is Good News because Christ comes to us just as we are, but He doesn't leave us like we are.**

God's grace takes away the sins of our past. It gives us power over sin in the present. It assures victory over death and the grave in the future. How then does the Gospel, the Good News of Christ change the way we live. See verse 58. Our work is not in vain because our faith is not in vain. Our work and our faith have a purpose.