

**Alderwood Community Church  
Easter Sunday – April 4, 2010**

**What If Jesus Didn't Rise From The Dead?**

1 Corinthians 15:14-19

**Big Idea: We have hope of eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

Reading of the Easter Story: Luke 23:44 – 24:8 (Patrick Howard) (p. 1046)

**What if it isn't true? What if Jesus didn't actually rise from the dead?**

Paul addressed this in: 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 (p. 1139) **Read Text**

<sup>14</sup> *“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is 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 and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”*

**If Jesus isn't alive, and he didn't rise from the dead then 6 things would be true:**

**1. Our Preaching Is Meaningless. (14)**

Preaching of the gospel would be vain. Kenos- literally means empty, without anything, without result, without purpose, otherwise completely meaningless. It would have nothing to offer.

It would no longer be good news, it would be no new at all. As Paul had just said, the heart of the gospel is this, *“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.”* (3-4) If you take away the resurrection, you take out the heart of the gospel!

*“Christianity is Christ. The person and work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built. If he is not who he said he was, and if he did not do what he said he had come to do, the foundation is undermined and the who superstructure will collapse. Take Christ from Christianity, and you disembowel it; there is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity; all else is circumference.”* John Stott

**2. Our Faith In Christ Is Worthless. (14, 17)**

Just as no resurrection would make preaching Christ meaningless, it would also make faith in Him worthless. Again the word here is kenos, meaning empty, fruitless, void of effect, to no purpose. After all, it would be placed in a dead man.

In vrs. 17 he repeats it again, *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.”* Mataios- idle, empty, fruitless, powerless, lacking truth, essentially it is useless. Our faith is unable to secure any results. A dead savior could not give life. If Christ did not rise, we will not rise.

### 3. All Christians Are Liars (15)

Beginning with the Apostles and every person who claimed to have witnessed the risen Christ and every person who preached the risen Christ was a liar, including Paul and the other apostles. They were not simply mistaken, but willfully mistaken, that is liars, who obviously collaborated together to harmonize their story.

If the apostles, the prophets, and the New Testament writers lied about the heart of the gospel why should they be believed about anything else? Why should their teachings be considered inspired if they so blatantly falsified their teaching about Jesus' resurrection? All New Testament truth stands or falls together based on the resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then this book would be a worthless document that no reasonable person would trust.

It clearly follows that if the resurrection were not true, Christ Himself lied, or at best was tragically mistaken. In either case, He hardly would have qualified as the divine Son of God or the world's Savior and Lord. Jesus would not have been The Victor but a victim.

As a matter of fact the very reputation and character of God is destroyed if there is no such thing as resurrection.

### 4. All Christians Are Hopelessly Lost "In Their Sins" (17)

After repeating the consequence that believers' faith would be futile, or vain (v. 14), the apostle points to the obvious additional result that believers would be no better off spiritually than unbelievers. Christians would *still be in their sins* just as much as the most wicked and unbelieving pagan.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then sin won the victory over Christ and therefore continues to be victorious over all men. If Jesus remained dead, then, when we die, we too will remain dead and damned. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), and if we remain dead, then death and eternal punishment are the only prospects of believer and unbeliever alike. The purpose of trusting in Christ is for forgiveness of sins, because it is from sin that we need to be saved. "Christ died for our sins" and "was buried, and ... raised on the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). If Christ was not raised, His death was in vain, our faith in Him is in vain, and our sins are still counted against us. And therefore we will face the judgment of God.

### 5. We Have No Hope Of Seeing Our Loved Ones Who Have Died. (18)

If there is no resurrection, then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have are lost. Every saint, Old Testament or Christian, who had died would have forever perished. The hall of the faithful in Hebrews 11 would instead be the hall of the foolish. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, and all the others would have been faithful for nothing. They would have been mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, and put to death completely in vain. All believers of all ages would have believed for nothing, lived for nothing, and died for nothing. Their faith would have been in vain, their sins would have been unforgiven, and their destiny would be damnation.

We would have absolutely no hope of seeing our believing relatives who have gone before us.

## 6. All Christians Would Be The Most Pitied People On Earth. (19)

Without the resurrection we would have no Savior, no forgiveness, no gospel, no meaningful faith, no purpose for this life, and certainly no hope of eternal life.

*Pitied-* deserving of sympathy for one's pathetic and miserable condition. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then all our worship, all our sacrifice, all of our evangelism has been a waste of time. Christianity is a hoax, our life would have been a mockery, a charade, a tragic joke.

**But...praise the Lord, we are not to be pitied...**for Paul immediately continues, "**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep**" (15:20). The word translated as 'indeed' (v. 20) in the NIV means 'now, at this very moment'!

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3*

**Big Idea: We have hope of eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

Jesus Christ did rise from the dead. We have (1) The empty tomb, (2) His appearances and (3) Changed lives to prove it!

According to the Guinness Book of World Records. The "Most successful lawyer: Sir Lionel Luckhoo succeeded in getting his 245<sup>th</sup> successive murder charge acquittal by January 1, 1985." That's an astonishing feat that nobody in the world has come close to repeating.

What skills do you think he needed to rise to that unprecedented level of courtroom success? Certainly he must be smart and savvy. He must have tremendous analytical skills so he can dissect what may appear on the surface to be an air-tight case. And he must be a world-class expert on what constitutes reliable and persuasive evidence.

As we approach Easter, wouldn't it be interesting to get an opinion from an expert like Luckhoo on the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Well, during his own spiritual journey, Luckhoo turned his expertise to the question of whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ fits the test of legal evidence. And here's the conclusion he ultimately reached: *"I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."* And then Luckhoo did the most logical thing he could do: he became a follower of Jesus Christ.

**Since Jesus Christ has risen from the dead then we know these 6 things to be true:**

**1. Our Preaching Is Powerful And Changes Lives.** (Our preaching is not meaningless.)

*"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."* Romans 1:16

**2. Our Faith Has Substance.** (Our faith is not useless.)

The Resurrection was God's validation that the redemption paid by Christ on the cross was accepted. *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."* Romans 4:25

**The Resurrection of Jesus Christ validates:**

**A. He was who he said he was.**

Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. Rom. 1:4

**B. He would do what he said he would do. Mark 10:33-34**

*"Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'" Mark 10:33-34*

**3. Christians Speak And Possess The Truth.** (Christians are not liars.)

Our faith is based on the objective Word of God and is verified by the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Word of God can be trusted!

**4. We Have The Assurance That We Will See Our Believing Loved Ones Who Have Died.**

**5. Christians Are The Most Secure, Blessed And Joy Filled People On Earth.** (Not pitied)

**6. Our Sins Can Be Forgiven.** (key point)

*"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." 1 Cor. 15:3-4*

Paul tells us that *he received* the gospel *"by revelation from Jesus Christ."* (Gal. 1:12)

*According to the Scriptures* refers to Isaiah 53:5 *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wound we are healed."*

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23

*"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. R. 6:23*

*"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Romans 10:9-10*

Listen carefully to the words of this song that Kathy will sing. Maybe it represents what is on your heart right now.

**Song:** *Save Me* Kathy Robinson

**Prayer Of Decision:** If Kathy's song represents the condition of your heart right now, and you want to express your faith to God, repeat this prayer in your heart to the Lord, right now:

*Dear Jesus,*

*I know that I am a sinner and have sinned against you. I believe that you died  
On the cross to forgive me of my sins and that you rose on the third day. I accept  
Your forgiveness and your gift of eternal life in heaven. Make me into the person  
You want me to be. Amen*

**Transition to song:** *Brand New Day*

The Greek word, *Evangel* is the word translated messenger. That is what I am today. In ancient times an *Evangel* was a messenger who came from the place of battle and declared victory over their enemies...The messenger would appear, raise his right hand in greeting and call out with a loud voice: *Chaire...nikomen.* ... "Rejoice..we have the victory." Because the victory has been won, *life can now be lived in a new way.*

At the end of 1 Cor. 15 the Apostle Paul thrusts his hand up in the air and declares:

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? But *thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (55,57)

Illus: Max Lucado in his book, *Six Hours One Friday*, tells the story of a missionary in Brazil who discovered a tribe of Indians in a remote part of the jungle. They lived near a large river. The tribe was in need of medical attention. A contagious disease was ravaging the population. People were dying daily. A hospital was not too terribly far away—across the river, but the Indians would not cross it because they believed the river was inhabited by evil spirits. And to enter its water would mean certain death. The missionary explained how he had crossed the river and was unharmed. But they were not impressed. He then took them to the bank and placed his hand in the water. They still wouldn't go in. He walked into the water up to his waist and splashed water on his face. It didn't matter. They were still afraid to enter the river. Finally, he dove into the river, swam beneath the surface until he emerged on the other side. He raised a triumphant fist into the air. He had entered the water and escaped. It was then that the Indians broke into a cheer and followed him across. Isn't that what Jesus did? He entered the river of death and came out on the other side so that we might no longer fear death, but find eternal life in Him.

**Song:** *Brand New Day* Men's Trio

**Benediction/Closing Prayer:** *"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it."* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24