

4-12-09 – Resurrection Sunday

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“24” – The Resurrection – He Is Risen Indeed! (1 Cor. 15:1-28)

Easter, as I remember it, was always a great holiday when I was growing up. There were the negative aspects, like getting new shoes and clothes, visiting grandparents in Corona and Elmont, and having to get all dressed up to go to church. We had to have our pictures taken in our new clothes, and my sisters had new pastel colored dresses and hats and coats. The best part for me was that it was the official breaking in of warmer weather, the school year getting shorter, and the start of playing ball every day. Of course the best part of our Easter morning was finding our Easter Baskets that Mom hid somewhere in the house filled with all kinds of candy that translated into dentist visits and “the spring clean out.” Yep an annual physic.

I found this article by Rob Prince, senior pastor of Central Church of the Nazarene in Lenexa, Ks. He writes in part ...

I found a kid’s Easter candy survey in my files. I’m not sure if the survey is scientific. I clipped it from a newspaper a couple of years ago ... here are some of the results:

RED is the favorite color of Jelly Bean (29 %). Of course!

BLACK is the least favorite (53 %). No argument from me.

59.6 % of children prefer a solid Easter Bunny as opposed to a hollow bunny. Duh!

52.8 % of kids say they eat the ears off the chocolate bunny first. Agree?

That reminds me of an old joke I heard (he says) – where two chocolate bunnies were talking. One of the chocolate bunnies had its ears eaten off. The other bunny noticed and said, “Hey, I see your ears were bitten off.” To which the bunny with the missing ears replied, “What?” (There’s nothing like a good joke and that was nothing like a good joke!).

Here’s the most disturbing number of all from that survey: 75.7 % of kids say they like Peeps. Even PJ said he loved Peeps as a kid. What? Are you kidding me? Peeps? The bird-shaped pastel-colored sugar marshmallow blobs? Three-fourths of the children in America like Peeps? I hate Peeps (me too – always did – that’s why I chose to read this article). Don’t be fooled my fellow pastors! Peeps are an attempt to sicken America! Did you know that Peeps stands for, **“Putrid Entirely Evil Puffed Sugar?”** Forget crime rates and drug usage statistics – here’s the number that proves the troubled state of America: more kids listed Peeps (14 %) as their favorite Easter candy than Jelly Beans (13.9 %). This is an outrage – he continues. (He then goes on about Jelly Beans in his family and his love for them).

Easter in the day of my youth, Rob continues, was jellybeans, new church clothes, ham dinners, decorating eggs, and hunting for baskets. We had sunrise services and all-church breakfasts. Lilies and singing “He Lives” followed by “Up From the Grave He Arose” (like last year’s choir sang) filled the sanctuary in the morning. We’d go to my grandmother’s house in the afternoon. Easter was a good day!

Easter should still be a good day. Maybe some of our traditions have changed. Maybe some of our songs we sing and the way we do things are not the same, but the ancient proclamation that “He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed” is still a message our world desperately needs to hear. Whether you have a pocket full of jelly beans or not, and whether you proclaim it with a choir, a praise team, or a guy with a kazoo, the world needs to hear it. Peeps may be the choice of today’s generation, just as for many – guitars trump pipe organs, and praise teams outnumber choirs. Whether with Peeps or jelly bean breath, whether with organs or guitars, let’s proclaim loud and long: **He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!**

I never heard those words when I was a kid. I knew Jesus was raised from the dead, but it wasn’t a reality in my mind. However, now I can say, “He is Risen, indeed.” How about you? Are these words new to you? Are these words so common in your mind, you don’t really think about the meaning and the reality of it all anymore? Let’s look at Paul’s writings to the church in Corinth and examine what a critical part the resurrection plays in our faith.

READ: 1 Cor. 15:1-28 (NIV)

I know this is not a traditional portion of Scripture to read for Easter Sunday, but I would like to look at a few things that Paul brings to our attention here. The Corinthian Church had so many issues, and Paul’s letter to them is mostly corrective. With all their problems, they still had a spiritually superior attitude. Did you ever experience this in a church? They know God - (8:2; 13:12); they have spiritual gifts - (1:5-7); they are mature (or so they think) - (2:6; 14:20); they are spiritual people - (3:1); they are strong - (10:12); they are already filled, rich, and reigning in the kingdom - (4:8), yet they have no clue. They look down on others who they consider less endowed than they. Meanwhile, they are neglecting their own spiritual well being by not addressing their own human entanglements. That’s why Paul writes to them in v. 10:12, *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”*

I – The Corinthian Problem (1-3): (Read v. 1&2)

Somehow, they have drifted off, by the teaching of some among them, into thinking there is no resurrection from the dead. How could this happen? Can we relate to this at all? I know we are much more knowledgeable and more spiritual now than these people were. HELLO! That’s what they thought too. I’m sure part of the problem was that it had been years since they heard the gospel of Christ and believed. Yet nothing had changed for them in their life. Jesus had still not yet returned. People among them were still dying. No one had been raised from the dead since, well – you know, but Jesus was special. The status quo can really damage our faith sometimes. We all have hope – or some weak figure of it. However, the hope of the resurrection is foundational to our beliefs and faith. So, Paul confronts them on this very important point. He takes them back to the original gospel message that they founded their faith and church upon. They were saved and grounded on a message that hinged on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and on the resurrection of all who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. He tells them it is this Good News that saves them IF THEY FIRMLY BELIEVE IT! (Conditional).

The alternative is that they ***“believed something that was never true in the first place.”*** Wow – what a let-down. In verse three Paul informs them that he passed on to them what he thought was most important. So, Paul thought the whole resurrection concept was most important to the overall gospel of salvation. The resurrection is an integral part of and central to the overall gospel message of salvation. This is powerful stuff. “Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.” All that Jesus did fulfilled Scripture and O.T. prophecy. But it didn’t end with His death...

II – The Reality of Jesus’ Resurrection – (4-11):

Paul makes his point about the fact of Jesus resurrection by citing both a prophetic fulfillment aspect and an eyewitness aspect (including himself). Paul doesn’t quote O.T. Scripture to substantiate this, and he doesn’t attempt to prove the physical death since it was well known and commonly accepted. He mentions the burial to show the genuineness of His death. But the resurrection ... that was a different story. Valid eyewitnesses were necessary to attest to this historic event. There is a resurrection from the dead because Jesus was resurrected as an example. The sinless Christ died for our sins and He was raised forever (**Ps. 16:9-11**). Paul even mentions “on the third day” maybe to address Jesus’ words in Matt. 12:40 where He compares His three days in the tomb with Jonah in the belly of the great fish.

He was seen by Peter – then by The Twelve (a name given to his closest friends) – then by 500 believers or followers – then by James (the Lord’s brother) – then by all the apostles – last of all – by Paul as one born “at the wrong time.” He was not worthy (although who really is) because of the way he once persecuted the church of Jesus Christ – but Paul recognized the grace of God that forgives any sin against him if we just recognize it and repent. So Paul sets out in this passage to clearly establish by fulfillment of Scripture and by multiple eyewitness accounts that Jesus in fact was raised from the dead. So the resurrection is a real deal.

III – Without The Resurrection – (12-19):

Paul begins this section by asking a question. Actually, he asks lots of questions in this section. However, his questions are not really questions as we understand questions – with doubt or in search of an answer. These questions are statements of fact in question form. So he begins... *If it is preached that Christ has been raised...* This is not a question but a statement of fact – It is preached that Christ has been raised (as He has been) from the dead. Paul uses this same device throughout this section to make his point. This is Paul’s main point in the whole passage. Some have argued that there is NO resurrection from the dead. Paul shows how this notion is completely contrary to everything we as Christians believe. He uses the term “has been raised” or “been raised” seven times in this short section all relating to Jesus to hammer in that this is a foundational point – Jesus has been raised from the dead! These two devices make it real clear that Jesus was resurrected and that this is central to everything else we believe or our faith is meaningless.

Paul makes several conclusions based on the false premise that the dead do not rise.
If there's no resurrection of the dead – (starting at v. 13):

Christ was not resurrected (v.13)

Preaching this is stupid (he didn't say that) – empty, meaningless – (v. 14)

We are false witnesses about God – liars if it didn't happen- (v. 15)

Paul neatly raps these first conclusions between v. 13 and v.16 which both state:
"If there is no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised."
Paul then brings out more conclusions **if Christ were not raised, starting in v. 17:**

Faith in this Christ is fruitless – we're still in sin and guilt – (v. 17)

Believers who have already died are lost forever – no hope – (v. 18)

Why endure hardship/persecutions now? – How pitiful – (v. 19)

Paul's testimony about the risen Christ is false. If we believe in Jesus only for this life we are most pathetic. There has to be more to life than this! There has to be more to religion than this. There has to be more to God than this! There is! The ***"hope in Christ"*** part of v. 19 is important. It means a continual hope throughout life.

IV – He Is Risen Indeed – Our HOPE Eternal – (20-28):

The previous section is NOT the case, however. Indeed, Christ has risen, as all the Corinthian believers would agree with. So – he uses this central point of the gospel that they believed as a way of introducing the logical conclusion that **all believers in Christ will also experience a resurrection from the dead**. Paul tells them that Jesus was indeed raised from the dead – ***"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."***

It didn't end with Him. There is a promise of a resurrection from the dead for all who have put their faith in Jesus. This term ***"firstfruits"*** referred back to the O.T. where the first of the harvest and of all one took in was offered to the Lord. The rest of the harvest was coming after. So with Christ ... He preceded the rest of the dead in the resurrection. But – the rest of the harvest is coming. All who have died in Christ will experience a resurrection from the dead to a new life – not just in spirit, but also in a glorified body – at His second coming **(1 Thess. 4:13-18)**.

Paul makes a clear distinction that there are two time frames in our text. First Christ was raised from the dead **v. 20**, then ***"when he comes, those who belong to him"*** will also be raised from the dead **v. 23**. The Parousia – coming again – of Jesus Christ - is what the true Christians long for. ***Matt. 24:27 – "For as lightening that comes from the east and is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."*** Paul has time sequences in mind.

In the right time, because Christ has been raised from the dead, he will put all things in subjection under His feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death** (see also Rev. 20:14; 21:4). All talk of the return of Christ immediately puts us into the book of Revelation, where John shows us what is to come. Jesus will reign on the seat of judgment and separate the true believers from the rest. Reward or Condemnation.

v. 27 – “For he has put everything under his feet.” This is an O.T. concept of total victory. Of course God is not in subjection to Christ, but God has put everything under Jesus’ feet. And finally, Jesus is recognized as having always been in subjection to the Father’s will – even in obeying to his death on a cross. All of this was to show that God is All in All. God is supreme. He is in control. He has ordered the events of history, and He has ordered the events of your life and mine.

Conclusion:

So how do you view the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? How do you think about your own resurrection as believers from the dead at the coming of Jesus? Do you think Jesus will really come again? What is stopping you from believing? **IF** Jesus was raised indeed, then why do we stumble at the fact that we will also be raised from the dead – to live and reign with him forever? Paul has shown us the facts. Jesus **was** raised and therefore we also will be raised from the dead.

We may not escape natural death. We may have to face infirmities and sickness. But – the promise remains true... we will be raised to life if we believe in Jesus. The resurrection is not merely a concept. Because Christ was raised, we too shall be raised to live with him forever. **The resurrection is our only hope!**

“The Resurrection is God’s - AMEN to Christ’s statement - IT IS FINISHED.”

-- S. Louis Johnson

If I were to ask you to describe Easter without using any words, you could only use punctuation marks, which punctuation mark would you choose to describe this Easter for yourself? Maybe this Easter is a comma for you. It makes you stop, pause, think, and listen, but that’s about it. Perhaps today is a downer – a big bold PERIOD. You thought you’d feel excited, but instead it seems to be more like an empty ritual. You feel like you’re not on the inside, but on the outside ... an onlooker.

It was a day when life felt like a period for Jesus’ disciples. He was dead. He was buried. An end to their expectations, period. But wait – news of an empty tomb . . . the period is no longer a period, it’s a question mark. That’s worse than a period. Now they’re beginning to doubt. Where is He? They’re perplexed. The guards are gone; the stone is rolled away. He is not there. And if not there, where?

*An angel speaks, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but **He has risen**. Remember how He spoke to you while He was in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and how He must be crucified, **and the third day He must rise again**.” Of course they remembered! The periods are gone. The question marks are removed. There is one massive exclamation point!*

That’s what Easter is all about . . . an exclamation of gratitude and of praise for the resurrection of Jesus Christ and for the salvation His victory over death has brought to us. (Joe LoMusio, If I Should Die Before I Live)

He is risen! – He is risen, indeed!