

Easter Sunrise Service

“Reasons He Arose”

I Corinthians 15:17-20

And good morning and Happy Easter. It's good to see all of you this morning. I Corinthians 15:17, which we did not read, says that *if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile*. You're still in your sins. If that were the case, we wouldn't say Happy Easter - it would be the most dreadful day we could imagine. But thank the Lord that we started with, verse 20. But in fact, not a possibility. Not a hope, not even by faith. But in fact, Christ has been raised the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Well, this is a special, message for me to give today. It really takes me back 21 years ago to 2004. At that time, four interesting events were taking place that merged, together, for me. One the first was the movie, The Passion of the Christ. It came out and it showed in great detail the horror, the gore of Christ's, passion of his death and his crucifixion. It showed the how and the what, but it didn't show the why. It didn't tell the why.

And so at that same time, the second, event that took place was - John Piper wrote a book to explain the why of the crucifixion. He wrote 50 Reasons Why Christ Came to Die. And both of these had an impact on me. The book, especially. And so I was using this and thinking about it as I was preparing to preach the sunrise service 21 years ago, around this time during Holy Week, and I was going to draw from that book that was being written. But then the third event happened, and that was for me to preach, to prepare. And so in that preparation, I came up with 50 reasons for why Christ rose from the dead. And so I have it here. I didn't make it into a book, but I did make it into a little front and back paper 50 reasons why Christ rose from the dead. But, a fourth event took place at that time that prevented me from preaching this sunrise service. Bruce Stallings, our executive pastor at the time, graciously filled in for me that Sunday. And then, as many of you know, he's preached this service, for the past 21 years. Every Sunday, and has done a fantastic job until he left, this past year to take another position. But the fourth reason that I didn't preach that Sunday was the death of my father during Holy Week. On Wednesday, we got a call from my mom that my dad had had a massive heart attack, and he was in Montgomery in a hospital.

So my brother and I gathered stuff together. I took two cards that my kid scribbled, with two prayers for my dad that he would never read. But, we rushed down there to see him in the hospital to be with my mom. And then, the next day on Maundy Thursday, he died. And so that Saturday we had the graveside and Monday we had the funeral. And so that's why I didn't, preach on that, Sunday morning.

Well, when Dr Doriani and I were talking about me preaching this Sunday morning, it was a joy for me to go back and pull out my 50 reasons Why Christ rose from the dead so that I could share some of that with you today. Now, obviously I can't share all 50, so this morning I'm going to share with you just three. Then we'll have time to go to the early service and to have some donuts and coffee before! Everybody will like that.

So, the three reasons he arose that I want to share with you this morning are simply...

1. to prove his power
2. to make us alive
3. and to cause us to reign

And I want to look at three passages to deal with each of these.

The first is to prove his power over death in the grave, and we will look at acts chapter two. If you have your Bibles, turn to Acts chapter two. I'm going to look at a few passages from, from, verses 23 through 35. We won't look at the whole passage, but it's a remarkable passage that deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His power over death in the grave. And in verse 23 it says this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed him by the hands of wicked men. God raised him up, losing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. The New American Standard says that it was impossible for him to be held in its power. Or as we just saying just a few moments ago, death cannot keep his prey. Jesus, my Savior, he tore the bars away. Jesus, my Lord, death could not hold him and the grave could not keep him. Peter goes on to explain in this passage two sections from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110. We're actually going to use some, 16, ten, and 11 for our call to worship in our morning services after this.

But, Peter says, as he's giving his sermon, he says, this can't be fully about him, about, about David, when he, hearkens back to Psalm 16, he says, we have David. we know that David was died. He was buried. He was in a tomb. And we have the tomb. We know where it is, so it can't be fully about him. Listen to what he says as he refers to Psalm 16 in verse 27 of acts two. *For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.* What Peter is going to say is that can't be about David. So he says in verse 29, *brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried in his tomb is with us today, being therefore a prophet and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, he foresaw meaning David.* He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandon the Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up and that we are all witnesses about. So you see, it's this great idea that Jesus is the one that David was talking about. And then in, in acts two, verse 34, he refers to Psalm 110 and he says, For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says,

the Lord said to my Lord. God said to David's Lord Jesus, who was known as David's son, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool. He explains in this passage that Jesus Christ is reigning even now in heaven, and one day we'll destroy all of his and all of our enemies. Jesus, remember and remember what Paul said in this passage that we looked at earlier. in in First Corinthians 15 he says that death is our last enemy, and what an enemy it is. Every one of us here this morning will face that enemy some sooner than others, but we will all face the enemy of death. But Jesus defeated death by his death, and he secured eternal life by his resurrection. And the Bible says in revelation 21 day he will throw both death and Hades into the lake of fire. He will destroy it forever. Death could not destroy the author of life, Jesus Christ. His resurrection proves his power over death and the grave.

But a second reason he arose was to make us alive in Christ. The Scripture says this in many places Colossians two, the Ephesians two, second Timothy two. But I want to think of two passages, two verses from Romans eight, verses ten and 11. And in that passage it reminds us that the Christian himself experiences two resurrections. The first one is spiritual. We know that we were all born dead in our sins, and therefore we're in bondage to our sins. And Christ alone can make us alive and free us from the bondage of our sin causes in all of our lives.

Randy Alcorn says in his book Sin Sabbath highlights that while sin may offer temporary happiness, it ultimately disrupts true joy and happiness, especially in relation to our relationship with God and our love for Him. The underlying message is that happiness and joy are intricately tied to our relationship with God and that sin hinders our ability to experience these emotions fully. Sin is the culprit. But yet in Romans eight verse ten, Paul says, but if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life. Because of Jesus Christ. This is the spiritual resurrection. This is what it means to be born again, born from above, spirit, spiritual resurrection, his resurrection means that God accepted his death as payment for our sins and that we therefore are justified, declared not guilty if we put our trust in him.

Romans 425 says, he was delivered up because of our sins, and he was raised because of our justification. This is the work of Christ in our life spiritually if we come to know him. But Romans 811 speaks of another resurrection, a physical resurrection from the dead that begins at our death. Notice it says in verse 11 of Romans eight, If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, all true believers have the spirit in in us.

He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. His power over the death in the grave actually provides us with power over the death, his power over our death and the grave that we're laid into. His resurrection guarantees our resurrection and enables us to live forever with him. When we take our last breath in this life, we all will take our first breath of living forever. Jesus said some to go away into eternal life, and some the next breath to eternal punishment. But we all will live forever.

Now also our new life in Christ allows us to walk in newness of life and to live for the glory of God, for the things that he's told us about, for his will, and to place our life in his hands.

Some of you this morning, it's a beautiful day. But you may say, yeah, I don't feel like that. I'm really not living all for the glory of God. There are things in my life, things that I've done that really are not good, and I really don't feel that God loves me and cares for me. Every true believer experiences this feeling. At different times. We lose the sweet fellowship of Christ happens to me all the time, and yet we never lose our secure relationship in him.

My dad loved, Dr Donald Gray Barnhouse, who was a pastor at 10th Prayers in Philadelphia from 1927 to 1960, 33 years. And my dad, back in the old days, he would record from a cassette player. Those of you who are young don't know what that is. Ask somebody my age or older. But these cassettes, he put it next to the radio, and, I mean, he had hundreds of cassette tapes of Dr Barnhouse, his sermons from the radio, Bible Hour. And so he recorded those over and over again. And we listened to them early in our Christian life.

But Dr Barnhouse tells a great story from this very passage in Romans eight. For those of us who oftentimes do not feel that God loves us because we're not living the way we should for him, and he tells a story about how he and his wife went to a dinner event one night and they didn't get back until midnight. But when they got back there, their oldest daughter, who was just a young toddler at the time, was just weeping uncontrollably. And the babysitter said, I can't, I can't do anything I've tried for the last four hours. She will not stop. And so Dr Barnhouse went into the room and she grabbed him and she came up to him and she hugged him and she said, daddy, say it isn't true. Say it isn't true. Tell me that you love me. Dr Barnhouse said, of course I love you. Of course I love you. And she said, but she told me, the babysitter, she told me that if I was bad, that you wouldn't love me anymore. And I've been really bad. And so I really don't think that you love me. Dr Barnhouse squeezed her close to him, and he said, child, I love you. I always will. He said, when you are good, I love you with the love that makes me glad and makes you glad when you are bad. I love you with a love that makes me sad. It makes you sad. But I love you good or bad. I'm your daddy. And that will never change, he said before he even finished saying that his child was, smiling and went fast asleep. And then he said, we've passed out of death and into life, and the Lord loves you. The Lord loves you with an eternal love that is not dependent upon how we act or what we do. He loves us. Just like the children's song Jesus Loves Me when I'm good, when I do the things I should, he even loves me when I'm bad, though it makes him very sad. Now this is a great passage. The great, truth that we learn from this passage.

Well, also in just a few days for some of us and days away, we will also be with God in heaven, united with him, never to be sorrowful again, never to experience sin or sadness or any heartache. I told you at the beginning that when we went down to see my dad on that

Wednesday, I took two cards with two prayers from my kids that he would never, that he would never read, but he would experience the very next day. And I've shared this many times in Sunday school, but one of the prayers from the cards was, we love you, daddy. Get well really soon. The second one said, daddy, we pray that you have the best Easter ever. And both of those prayers were answered the very next day. He got well really soon. Perfect. No pain, no sorrow. And he experienced the best Easter ever because he was in the very presence of his living Savior. Because of the resurrection, all who trust in Jesus Christ have been made alive forever.

Well, the third reason that he rose is the cause us to reign with him forever and ever. Listen to what he says in revelations 22 five. Revelation 22 five John says this, and now it will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

If you and I really understood things better spiritually, if we weren't clouded by the things of this world, when we read that we would fall back where we go. You got to be kidding. What did he just say? He said they will reign forever and ever. Think about this for just a moment with me at Christmas time, we sing and hear a song played, Handel's Messiah.

And that's a great thing. Pastor Reeder always said that it's not really Christmas until we sing the Hallelujah Chorus. But Pastor Reeder also reminded us when we talked many times that Handel really wrote The Messiah for Easter. It was an Easter Oratorio, particularly the second and third parts. And think about the Hallelujah Chorus itself when it says was taken, the section taken, straight from revelation 1115, the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords.

But this verse in revelation 22 five says, they will reign. We will reign forever and ever. This is astounding. It's one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture. It sets for us the most exalted exaltation that God Himself could place on every one of us. Can you imagine we who were once children of wrath and hell, deserving of his punishment forever the weakest saint here among us, the weakest saint that makes it into heaven, and the strongest saint alike will rule forever and ever with the king of kings and the Lord of Lords. All we rule over. We don't know. The passage doesn't say, does it? Tell us who we're going to reign over. But it says we will reign forever and ever. We know the Scripture says we will rule over and reign over the wicked at the Last Judgment. And we know that it says we're going to reign and rule over the good angels that are in heaven, but otherwise we don't know what.

But it does not matter. It doesn't matter is that Jesus says, I'm giving my kingdom to you, and you're going to share it with me and reign forever and ever. If you trust Jesus Christ to save you,

and if you surrender yourself to his reign and his rule and His lordship in your life, this verse is true of you. The Lord will be your light, and you will reign with him forever and ever.

Only three reasons why Christ rose from the dead that I share today prove his power over death in the grave to make us alive in Christ, and to, cause us to reign forever and ever. There 47 more on my sheet. But we can't hear those here and now. But brothers and sisters, I hope that these have been an encouragement to you today, and I pray that these truths would sink deep in your hearts and minds for a long, long time. And if you're here today and you don't know Christ, I will not surrender to him on this glorious day as your Lord and Savior. Live with and reign with him forever and ever.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we do ask that you would sink these truths deep within our hearts and minds and encourage your people. This morning that you love us with an everlasting love and father, a new pray. If there's anyone here who's never put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ, that this morning they would say, Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and I need you. Thank you that you sent Christ to die for my sins and caused him to rise from the dead. To justify me. I ask that you would forgive me of my sins and come into my life. Make me the person that you want me to be through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.