

What a glorious day to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What brings us here are three simple words that changed the course of history, "He is risen." To my knowledge people have never gathered like this to say, "The stock market has risen...or my 401k has risen...or my blood pressure has risen." That's because none of those upticks are permanent. We are painfully aware of the fickleness of finances and some day you won't have to worry about your blood pressure – you won't have any. You will be dead and death is permanent. Or is it? Jesus died but death couldn't keep Him in the grave. He rose from the dead – to live forever.

Some say that a physical resurrection is impossible. Resurrection is merely a metaphor, a symbol of new life. I recently read an interview with atheist **Christopher Hitchens** whose 2007 book, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, has made him arguably the nation's most notorious atheist. The interviewer was Marilyn Sewell, a recently retired minister of the First Unitarian Church of Portland one of the largest Unitarian Churches in the U.S....

The Bible is a serious book with a serious message. It presents the resurrection as historical fact. If the resurrection didn't happen what made these people sacrifice reputation, property, family? What made them go to their grave believing in a resurrection? Did they die for a metaphor? Of course not. But you believe in the resurrection too or you wouldn't be here. The question is not did it happen but why did it happen? Why was the resurrection necessary? The early Christians were convinced that nothing else could answer the deep, nagging questions in the human soul. I want to consider a section in Paul's letter to the Romans and offer some reasons why the resurrection is necessary.

I. The resurrection was necessary because death is inescapable. Romans 5:12, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." Death is our great enemy. No one wants to die we want life. We are obsessed with life. That's why we have a game called "Life." That's why we have a cereal called "Life." (They don't make a cereal called, "Death," even though you may feel like it when you wake up in the morning.) We buy life insurance not death insurance even though you have to die to get it. We hand out "life preservers." Why not "death preventers?" When someone dies we know exactly who to call – the undertaker. But who do you call to experience life? Who do you call to solve the problem of death?

Charles Steinmetz...retired from GE...called in as a consultant to solve a difficult electrical problem...found the malfunction... marked it with a piece of chalk...bill for \$10,000..."Chalk mark \$1. Knowing where to put it \$9,999."

On this dying planet, stuff breaks. Who do you call when things break? When your marriage breaks or your heart beaks? When you have an addiction that is not just destructive but it's humiliating. When you demonstrate anger...again...in a way that embarrasses you and a couple of your family members. When you get

greedy and go deep in debt. Who do you call?

Romans 5:17-19 explains why there is so much death. Death is the result of sin. **“The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. 18 Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life. 19 Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners.”**

Ro. 6:23 tells us very succinctly: the wages of sin is death. Hard to argue with that. The statistics on death are still pretty impressive. In fact, there is a 100% death rate on this planet. We might find a cure for cancer some day. We may eliminate small pox or malaria but no scientist will find a cure for death. However there is a cure.

II. The resurrection is necessary because life is the only cure for death.

“The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is life, eternal life through Jesus Christ.” Paul explains that those who are “baptized” into Jesus share in His death. In order to be united with Christ you have to share in the experience of His death. **Romans 6:3-5 3 Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. 5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was.**

When we are “baptized” into Jesus we share in His death so that we can share in His life. Becoming one with Jesus is one way to get to heaven. Have you ever heard someone say there is only one way to get to heaven? That’s not exactly true. There are actually two ways to get to heaven:

1. You can get to heaven by being absolutely perfect. How’s that perfection plan working for you? God made sure that no one could say, “I don’t sin.” How? By giving us the Law. **Romans 5:20, “God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were.”** The Law shines a flood light on our sin. There is another way...

2. You can get to heaven by God’s grace. When we identify with Christ, when we become one with Him, we enjoy the same life He enjoys. Jesus died a death I could never die so I could live a life I could never live - the kind of life He lived. **Romans 5:20-21, “God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant. 21 So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness (lit. “grace”) rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life**

through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Because of God’s wonderful kindness we are saved by grace through faith. But here’s what I want you to see in this passage. We don’t have to wait until we get to heaven to experience real life. We can experience it in the present. That’s another reason why the resurrection is necessary.

III. The resurrection is necessary because the meaning of life is the glory of God. Unless we experience a new birth we cannot glorify God. Sin not only leads to death but it keeps us from experiencing the life God wants us to experience.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Ro. 3:23. God created us to bring Him glory by reflecting His nature and purpose on the earth. But when sin entered in, man sought His own glory. We find more joy in our own glory than in God’s. Apart from Christ, we worship the work of our own hands and fall short of the glory of God. “I Am Second” Billboard on 635 - “It’s not about the Bunny!”

I love the perspective of Carrie Ten Boom when she was once asked how she planned to remain humble after an awards ceremony in which she was honored. She replied, “When Jesus was riding into Jerusalem and people were throwing palm branches in His way crying all honor to Him, do you suppose the donkey thought it was for him?” That’s a pretty good description of our fallen condition. We are a bunch of donkeys riding through life thinking it’s all about us. Corrie went on to say, “I am but a donkey and I know that these honors are for Christ alone.”

The message of Easter is that in Christ we are dead to sin but alive to the glory of God. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ we can come to life.

Romans 6:8-11 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. 9 We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. 10 He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. 11 So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.