

King's Way Church
Message for Mar 25, 2007
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EASTER REFLECTIONS: RESURRECTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?--A Theology of Death Part 1
1 Corinthians 15:1-20

So what really happens when we die? It sure sounds like people are asking the question these days. Faced with reality of death, many of us want some answers. Woody Allen said: ***"It's not that I am afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens."*** Death is not comfortable, in fact it brings little comfort, it jars us, it wakes us up to what's real because death happens to everyone 100% of the time.

Some ask, "Why is the resurrection so important?" One reason is that the resurrection proves that Jesus is who he said he is. He claimed to be God; he proved this by coming out of the grave. Another reason the resurrection is so important is because it changes the meaning of our existence. Believing in the resurrection of Christ changes the way we live, think, believe, and behave. Today, we're going to discuss the significance that the resurrection of Christ has in our lives. First of all...

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES THE MEANING OF FAITH.

(v. 17) ***And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins.***

People often make the mistake of thinking that religion is like a huge buffet table, and you can pick and choose the beliefs you personally find appetizing. They believe that religion is a "personal thing" that each individual can develop or discard according to his own whim. Well, as far as religious freedom goes, that's true. Everyone does have the constitutional right to choose whether or not to worship. But as far as truth goes, it's a whole different ball game. Truth is not determined by a matter of taste or preference.

The resurrection gives us assurance that our faith is not just a sentimental wish list. The reality of the resurrection gives substance to our faith, and gives us the ability to face life's toughest challenges with the assurance that God is on our side.

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES THE MEANING OF DEATH.

(v. 18) ***"[If Christ has not been raised]...all who have died believing in Christ have perished!"***

I have seen this happen again and again. Those with a strong faith in Jesus are able to face death--their own and that of loved ones--much differently than do people who are only "marginally" religious. Why? Because Christ's resurrection gives a new meaning to death. Death is not the end, and it no longer has power over us.

This is why Paul says ***"Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?"*** (15:55) Death's power has been defeated. He also says, ***"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*** (15:26) and ***"Death has been swallowed up in victory."*** (15:54) Because of the resurrection of Christ we know that death is merely the transition from this life to the next, and we can take comfort in Christ's promise: ***"I go to prepare a place for you."***

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES THE MEANING OF LIFE.

(v. 19) ***And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.***

Paul wrote this at a time when professing faith in Christ was potentially dangerous. Many Christians lived with the threat of death or persecution. In fact, throughout the 2000-year history of the Church, up to this very moment, Christians have suffered torture, abuse, persecution, mockery, and death. Twentieth century American Christians may not live under the threat of violent oppression, but that doesn't mean we don't suffer persecution or that we don't experience sacrifice. (2 Timothy 3:12) There is a price to pay for making that stand.

But if in fact Jesus is risen, then that changes everything...and the pain, and the sorrow, and the persecution, and the mistreatment, and even the little inconveniences have special significance. In fact, every detail of our lives has special significance. If

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there is no resurrection, the only logical purpose for living is pursuing your own pleasure. However, if Jesus Christ is risen the only logical purpose for living is to follow him and do his will.

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES THE MEANING OF THE FUTURE.

(v. 20) ***But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.***

When he rose from the dead Jesus was the “first fruits”² (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) of a new kind of human life, a life in which his body was made perfect, no longer subject to weakness, aging, or death, but able to live eternally.

When Christ redeemed us he did not just redeem our spirits (or souls)—he redeemed us as whole persons, and this includes the redemption of our bodies. Christ’s work of redemption to us will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection for which God created them. But at this present time, Paul says that we wait for “*the redemption of our bodies,*” and then adds, “***for in this hope we were saved***” (Rom. 8:23–24). The stage in the application of redemption when we receive resurrection bodies is called *glorification*. The taste of next week, and the **HOPE** of our future.

CONCLUSION

Without the resurrection, life is meaningless and Christianity is a weak, pitiful religion. But the resurrection adds muscle to Christian teaching. The resurrection makes our faith real. It gives our life meaning that is worth living and dying for. It gives us the hope for eternity!

“Our vision is to make a change in our community by being a ***life-giving*** church that is ***true*** to the Bible and ***relevant*** today by helping You find ***Your way!***”

-King’s Way Church

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