**Resurrection Power**

**Easter Sermon Merced April, 2023**

No shock. This morning we are going to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 15:13-19 Importance of the resurrection of Christ to Christianity.

v. 14 Paul: If Christ was not raised, then our faith is useless. v. 17 futile.

Why? v. we are still in our sins.

When we were baptized into Christ, we were buried with him. We come into mystical contact with the blood of Jesus.

Imagine if someone baptized you, but forgot to pull you up out of the water. What would be the result?

Illustration: ASL for baptism is death and resurrection.

v. 19 If our Christianity is only about living a better life here and now, we are to be pitied most!

Q: Is Paul exaggerating? I live a pretty good life. I have it pretty good compared to my worldly friends, with their addictions and seemingly meaningless lives.

You decide!

v. 13 It proves that resurrection from the dead is real.

If Jesus was raised from the dead, that makes a lot of potential questions much less significant.

What about the age of the earth?

What about the women’s role?

What about the fact that the book of Esther does not mention God?

What about the theory that Paul did not write Ephesians?

I don’t know, but I do know this: Jesus was raised from the dead.

Two points today:

1. Jesus was indeed raised—why I believe this to be true.

2. Resurrection Power—the resurrection has great power, not just for final resurrection, but in this life, here and now.

I. Jesus was indeed raised from the dead.

I will argue that this is about as assured a fact as we have from ancient history.

But, remember the skeptical warning of Scottish philosopher David Hume: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.” True!

Here is why I KNOW Jesus was indeed raised from the dead. Because of three (and arguably four) facts:

Fact #1. Jesus was indeed crucified in Jerusalem under Governor Pontius Pilate.

-Tacitus: Roman historian, just after 100 AD

To squelch the rumor [that he had started the Great fire in Rome], Nero created scapegoats and subjected to the most refined tortures those whom the common people called ‘Christians,’ [a group] hated for their abominable crimes. Their name comes from Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate.

*Annals* 15.44

 -Josephus Jewish historian, also 90s AD

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. The prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

*Antiquities*  18:3:3

Babylonian Talmud “On the eve of the Passover, they hanged Yeshu”

Fact # 2. The resurrection was publicly proclaimed and believed by the church, beginning in Jerusalem, immediately after the fact. (Acts 2:24)

 -Every piece of evidence proves that the resurrection has been at

 the heart of Christian teaching from the first sermon. Why do

 Christians meet on Sunday?

Fact #3. The tomb was empty on the third day. This is a fact. If the tomb had not been empty, then the resurrection would not have been proclaimed. End of story.

Question: What is the most reasonable explanation of the facts?

Fact #4? Jesus was alive after his crucifixion.

1 Cor. 15:3-7.

Paul: if you do not believe it, just ask one of them. Most of them are alive.

These were very high quality witnesses. All would have died for Jesus. It is absolutely inconceivable that they were deceived.

Illustration: 3 witnesses to the golden plates in Mormonism all apostasized from Mormonism.

Proposed Explanations: (Remember, extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof)

I The Stolen Body Theory

II The Swoon Theory (that Jesus did not actually die)

III Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead on the third day.

I The Stolen Body Theory

The reason the tomb was empty is that his body was stolen from the tomb.

Q: Who would have stolen the body?

Q: Could they have stolen the body?

Q: Did they, in fact, steal the body?

Matthew 27:62-66 A large boulder, a Roman guard. The Jews did not want anyone stealing this body!!!!

Would the Jews have stolen the body? They could have afforded the bribe. Why? What motive?

Even if they did, they would immediately have produced the body once the church claimed the resurrection.

Would the Romans have stolen the body? Why? It would have caused an insurrection.

Would the Christians have stolen the body? Definitely not! They were in hiding. The were defeated, discouraged, depressed, fearful of further reprisals.

Could they have? Defeat a cohort of Roman soldiers? Would this battle go unnoticed? Where are the bodies of the Christians?

Did they? Besides, the disciples clearly believed in the resurrection. Many died for this belief.

II The Swoon Theory.

Yes, they Crucified Jesus and yes, he was laid in the tomb (after all the tomb was sealed by a Roman guard), but Jesus had not really died. Later on in the cave he revived, broke free of his bandages, dusted himself off, rolled away the giant stone and fought his way through a cohort of Roman guards.

Think about Jesus’ physical situation. By Sun AM,

No food or water over 48 hours

Beaten almost to death

Crucified

When a person dies on the cross they hang limp. Suffocation occurs within 5 minutes. End of story.

The Romans were experts in killing. Could they have been mistaken?

The real problem: John 19:31-35.

Note, a flow of blood and water. The blood serum had separated from the platelets. Happens one hour after death.

Jesus was definitely dead before being stabbed. (John would not have known this fact that the blood separates)

Next, wrapped tightly in many layers of cloth strips from head to foot.

Almost killed

Then killed

Then given a fatal wound after being killed.

Then rolled away a stone and fought his way through a Roman guard.

Besides…

500 eyewitnesses!!!!! Jesus was alive after he was laid in the tomb.

Add to this, the Resurrection was prophesied!

1 Corinthians 15:3-7 v. 4 “on the third day.”

Jonah 1:17 Jonah was raised from the dead on the third day. (Matthew 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights….)

Genesis 22:1-12 Abraham received Isaac back from the dead on the third day. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Esther 4:15-5:1 Ester reprieved from death on the 3rd day.

Feast of Firstfruits. Lev 23:9-14

16th of Nisan. Jesus was raised from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits.

Feast of Firstfruits is a harvest festival when there is no harvest. It is the promise of a future harvest.

Jesus is the firstfruit from among the dead. His resurrection is a promise of ours. Colossians “the first fruit from the dead.”

And of course, it occurred on the 3rd Day.

1 Cor 15:20-22 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

II Resurrection Power

Romans 1:4 Jesus was declared Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.

Q: How much power would it take to raise Jesus from the dead? Could you do it? How much electrical power? What about medical science?

In Christ, we have the power of the resurrection in our life.

That’s a lot of power working in you!!!

Romans 6:2-5 If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

Because of Christ’s resurrection, we can life a new life.

I needed new life! My old life was corrupted. I messed up.

That’s power!!!

Romans 6:6-10 The power to overcome sin.

Sin no longer enslaves us. That is power!!!

Phil 3:10-11 The power to raise US from the dead. Somehow does not mean hopefully. It means, one way or another, I will be resurrected from the dead.

The power of the resurrection of Jesus at work in our lives. That is some power!

That is the definition of hope.

1 Peter 3:21 Power for salvation.

1Corinthians 15:50-58 Because of the resurrection of Jesus death loses.

You will have a new body—an imperishable body.

How do we know this? Jesus was raised from the dead. Look at the four facts!!! He is the firstfruits. His resurrection is a promise to us.

III Response:

John 11:21-26

John 11:45, 53 Worship him or kill him

John 11:45-48 Either;

Put your faith in Jesus or

Radically reject him and all he stood for.

What is your response to the resurrection?

Do you want power in your life?

Power to overcome sin.

Power to live a transformed life

Power to be raised from the dead!!!

That power is available to those who are baptized into Christ and are raised with Christ.

Lord’s Supper:

Usually, at LS, we focus on the death of Jesus, but today we focus on the resurrection. Let’s go back to Romans 6:2-7.

In baptism, we participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Like we read earlier, if Jesus was not raised, then you are still in your sins. But he was!!!

The elements—the bread and wine remind us of his horrifying death. But his death is not the end of the story is it?

Normally, the LS is a more somber ceremony, but not today. It is a celebration of Jesus’ victory over death.