



Title: If Christ Be Not Raised

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KEY TEXT

1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (NLT)

V12- But tell me this – since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead?

V13- For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either.

V14-And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless.

V15-And we apostles would all be lying about God – for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead.

V16- And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

V17- And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

V18-In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost!

V19- And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

V20- But in fact, Christ has been raised from dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a myth. It is a fact witnessed by many.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:4-8: -“He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.

The Corinthians in our Key Text were saying, “Dead men do not rise again.” So Paul attacked the central position of his opponents at Corinth by saying, “If you take up this position, it means that Jesus Christ has not risen again; and if this be so, the whole Christian faith is wrecked.”

Today is The Resurrection Sunday. And despite the ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE due to COVID 19, we as Christians still need to be intentional to celebrate this Resurrection of Christ and to be reminded once again about the significance of this event. The Cross and the Resurrection of Christ are the bedrock of our Christian beliefs and nothing should ever deter us from reflecting on these especially during this Holy Week. I would like to title my sermon this morning as, ‘IF CHRIST BE NOT RAISED’.

(1) 4 ESSENTIAL TRUTHS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

Why did Paul regard a belief in the resurrection of Jesus as so essential? What great values and great truths does the resurrection of Christ conserve?

The resurrection of Christ proves four great facts, which can make all the difference to a man’s view of life here and hereafter.

Tim Keller said, “The resurrection of Christ is not just something to believe in; it’s something to be lived. Christ is not a dead teacher. If he was a dead teacher, then being a Christian would just be to believe what he said. Since He’s a risen Lord, He comes and INTERPENETRATES our lives with a NEW ORDER OF BEING.”

So what are the 4 essential truths about the resurrection of Christ?

(i) THE RESURRECTION PROVES THAT TRUTH IS STRONGER THAN FALSEHOOD

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus said to his enemies, “Now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth” (John 8:40). Jesus came with the true idea of God and of goodness; His enemies procured His death because they did not want their own false view destroyed. If they had succeeded in finally obliterating Him, falsehood would have been stronger than truth.

The Resurrection is the final guarantee of the indestructibility of the truth.

(ii) THE RESURRECTION PROVES THAT GOOD IS STRONGER THAN EVIL

Again to quote the gospel of John, Jesus is represented as saying to his enemies, “You are of your father, the devil” (John 8:44). The forces of evil crucified Jesus and if there had been no Resurrection, these forces would have been triumphant.

J.A. Froude, the great historian wrote, “One lesson, and only one, history may be said to repeat with distinctness, that the world is built somehow on moral foundations, that in the long run it is well with the good, and in the long run it is ill with the wicked.” But if the Resurrection had not taken place, that very principle would have been imperiled, and we could never again be certain that goodness is stronger than evil.”

Application: What is the evil that is assailing you right now? Is it this COVID 19 lockdown that is plunging you into days of worry and days of hunger? What are the evil forces right now that are crucifying you on the cross? What is your cross of suffering right now?

Believers of Christ, two days ago, you all have heard the sermon of Pastor Toh Nee about the cross. The cross is an essential experience in every born-again believer's life. No believer is exempted from it. If you belong to Christ, you have to suffer like He did too – THE CROSS. It may be the evil forces or even the evil people of this fallen world that crucify you but remember – OUT OF THE CROSS COMES THE RESURRECTION. OUT OF WEAKNESS COMES REAL STRENGTH. OUT OF REPENTANCE AND ADMITTING YOU ARE WEAK COMES REAL POWER. OUT OF GIVING AWAY AND SERVING OTHERS COMES REAL STRENGTH. OUT OF GENEROSITY AND GIVING YOUR MONEY AWAY COMES REAL WEALTH. THAT'S THE GOSPEL STORY.

Questions: Christians, do you believe in the Risen Christ? Is He your Savior? If so, you can face death and you can face anything, including the cross and the evil of this fallen world. Can you face worry? Can you face troubles? Can you face the repercussion of this COVID 19 lockdown? The global landscape will not be the same for many years to come. The way we are going to worship Christ may not be that easy as before. There is this old hymn that goes like this – “Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.” If you believe the risen Christ is now in control of history, even the bad and evil things that happen to you ARE CROSSES THAT ARE GOING TO RAISE YOU. “Come on, crosses!” says a Christian. “THE LOWER YOU LAY ME, THE HIGHER YOU’LL RAISE ME.” “COME ON CROSSES!” YOU SAY, “JESUS THE RISEN LORD IS IN CHARGE OF EVERYTHING.”

The resurrection of Christ proves that good is stronger than evil. Even though it seems that the evil COVID (that carries the shape of the crown [Corona]) has caused all people of this world to bow to it, Jesus Christ our Resurrected Lord, the Master Ruler of all the universe, will surely overcome the evil COVID. The world may be cast into dark times for a few years but after that God will resurrect the world.

(iii) THE RESURRECTION PROVES THAT LOVE IS STRONGER THAN HATRED

Jesus was the love of God Incarnate.

“Love came down at Christmas,

Love all lovely, Love Divine.”

On the other hand, the attitude of those who procured His crucifixion was an almost virulent hatred, so bitter that in the end it was capable of ascribing the loveliness and graciousness of His life to the power of the devil. If there had been no Resurrection, it would have meant the hatred of man in the end conquered the love of God. The Resurrection is the TRIUMPH OF LOVE over all that hatred could do. This very beautiful poem sums up the whole matter:

*I heard two soldiers talking
As they came down the hill,*

The somber hill of Calvary,

Bleak and black and still.

And one said, ‘The night is late,

These thieves take long to die.’

And one said, “I am sore afraid,

And yet I know not why.’

I heard two women weeping

As down the hill they came,

And one was like a broken rose,

And one was like a flame.

One said, “Men shall rue

This deed their hands have done.’

And one said only through her tears,

‘My son! My son! My son!’

I heard two angels singing

Ere yet the dawn was bright,

And they were clad in shining robes,

Robes and crowns of light,

And one sang, 'Death is vanquished,'

And one in golden voice

Sang, 'Love hath conquered, conquered

All,

O heaven and earth rejoiced!"

The Resurrection is the final proof that love is stronger than hate.

(iv) THE RESURRECTION PROVES THAT LIFE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

If Jesus had died never to rise again, it would have proved that death could take the loveliest and best life that ever lived and finally break it.

Illustration: During the second world war a certain city church in London was all set out for harvest thanksgiving. In the center of the gifts was a sheaf of corn. The service was never held, for on the Saturday night, a savage air raid laid the church in ruins. The months passed and the spring came, and someone noticed that, on the bomb site where the church had stood, there were shoots of green. The summer came and the shoots flourished and, in the autumn, there was a flourishing patch of corn growing amidst the rubble. Not even the bombs and the destruction could kill the life of the corn and its seeds.

Similarly, our "Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Christ like the illustration given above, was like that sheaf of corn – "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

The Resurrection is the final proof that life is stronger than death.

The bodily resurrection from the dead for all who believe is one of the great tenets of Christian faith. This doctrine of the resurrection completes the spectrum of our joys and consolations. One of the deepest desires of the human heart is for love without parting. Needless to say, the prospect of resurrection is far more comforting than the beliefs that death takes you into nothingness or into an impersonal spiritual substance. The resurrection goes beyond the promise of the ethereal (intangible), disembodied afterlife. We get our bodies back, in a state of beauty and power that we cannot today imagine. Jesus' resurrection body was corporeal (tangible) – it could be touched and embraced, and he ate food. And yet he passed through closed doors and could disappear. This is a material existence, but one beyond the bounds of our imagination. The idea of heaven can be a consolation for suffering, a compensation for the life we have lost. But resurrection is not just consolation – IT IS RESTORATION. We get it all back – the love, the loved ones, the goods, the beauties of this life – but in new, unimaginable degrees of glory and joy and strength.

That is the reason why Paul is able to actually taunt at death. Why? Because he says in the beginning of Romans 1:4, 'God declared him to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection.' Paul didn't understand Jesus was the Son of God until he saw Him raised and he began to realize what Jesus has done. There is hope. Why? Because this is the Son of God. Death could not hold him down.

It says in Acts 2:24, when the first sermon was preached by Peter, 'He rose from the dead because death could not hold him.' It was impossible for death to hold him. Think about the POWER OF DEATH for a minute. Think about it. NOTHING CAN STOP DEATH. No human being can stop death. Look at the mortality rate in the world right now caused by the COVID 19. No human being can stop death. The power of decay. The second law of thermodynamics. Even mountains can't stop death. The mountains eventually get worn down to pebbles. Even the suns and the stars can't stop death. Even they burn out and go to decay. Think of the power of death.

Yet someone came who overmatched death. Jesus Christ was swallowed by death and exploded in its bowels. Jesus Christ did not just DEFY death. He did not just DENY death. He DESTROYED death. That's the reason why Paul can

say later in this chapter, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory” (1 Corinthians 15:55). That is why, I can boldly say that only Christians have this unbelievable ability to handle worry and handle anxiety. Why? Because they can look at the most powerful obstacle to happiness in the universe- DEATH ITSELF – and actually taunt it.

Application: When you have this hope of resurrection in you, you won’t be caught up in the spirit of global fear and panic – like panic buying or panic over infection and even death. You will have this steadiness in you because you know in your heart that Christ has already conquered the greatest fear of men- death, and so why worry and be anxious over other issues and challenges of life? And this brings me to my next point.

(2) RESURRECTION – THE CRUX OF OUR HOPE

There is no hope unless God himself has punched a hole in the ceiling of the universe and our great Captain Jesus Christ, who has opened a cleft in the pitiless walls of the universe, bids us come to see Him. He has entered in. He was born. He died for our sins. Now He’s raised again. He has risen from the dead. If all that’s true, then you can be saved, then there is HOPE for the future, then your sins can be forgiven, then you can have a relationship with God, then the Spirit of God can come into your life and change you.

Today, the whole world sure does look gloomy and hopeless because of the COVID 19 and because of so many lockdowns in many nations. How can we be totally sure when we look at all the horrible stuff that has happened in our life and out in the world now that someday God is going to make it all right? How can we not just hope so but be ABSOLUTELY SURE that in spite of our own failures, God loves us and will never let us go? How can we know that when we face death, it is not the end? ONLY IF WE KNOW THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND THEREFORE SO WILL WE.

Paul insisted that if the resurrection of Jesus was not a fact, the whole Christian message was based on a lie, that many thousands had died trusting in a delusion, that without it the greatest values in life have no guarantee. Then like what our key text says further in verse 32, And if there is no resurrection, “Let’s feast and drink, for tomorrow we die.” “Take away the Resurrection,” Paul said, “and you destroy both the foundation and the fabric of the Christian faith.” And

we Christians would then be the most miserable lot of people if Christ was our only hope.

But the fact remains today- Our Christ has indeed risen two thousand years ago. Since He has risen, we who have believed in Him will not be the most miserable lot of people but rather the most HOPEFUL people in this whole world as we are the only group that can taunt death in its face.

Let the resurrection of Christ affects the way we live and the way we think. Out of the cross comes the resurrection. The lower the cross lays us, the higher Christ will raise us. That is the power and the hope of resurrection for us. Our lives do not have to punctuate with death. But due to the resurrection of Christ, we have hope beyond this life.

Testimony: The theme of Etah for year 2020 is “THE YEAR OF RESURRECTION – THE NEW HAS COME.” God gave this theme to us as a declaration that whatever crosses God has allowed Etah to bear in 2012– be it the demonic forces behind evil elements in this fallen world to derail the church or our ministry, it is to prepare our whole church to witness with our very own eyes the power of Jesus to raise Etah up. The lower the enemies lay us, the higher Christ will raise us. Out of our weakness comes the real strength from the resurrection power of Jesus. Out of repentance and admitting we are weak comes real power of Christ. The story of our lives will always be the cross first and then the resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ interpenetrates our lives with a new order of being. So do not look at the COVID situation in our city as an unending path of hopelessness. Our God still is sitting upon the throne. The whole world has to recognize their weakness and helplessness in controlling this virus before our merciful and powerful God will step in. The resurrection power of Christ is still here. In His time, all thing will be made beautiful.

Therefore Christians, as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, let us allow the resurrection power of Jesus to renew us with new strength to face our tomorrow. Every fibre of the society is shaken up by this COVID 19 and we need to be the most hopeful group of people in this whole world and not be caught up in fear, worry and panic. Be steady for the Captain of our Soul has already conquered death on the cross. What can be greater than death? Because Christ is our Savior, we can face death and therefore we can face anything- even Covid 19.