

CONCORD COMMUNITY CHURCH

EASTER/RESURRECTION SERVICE, APRIL 17,2022

Title: The Meaning of the Resurrection for Today

Text: “*And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*” (Luke 24:32).

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:28 – 48

Introduction

The resurrection of Christ from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea is something far more than an isolated event of the ancient past that has no significance or meaning for today. Far from being a mere historical-event that happened more than two thousand years ago. The resurrection of Christ is a present reality in the light of which, the church must live and act today.

Depending upon the significance/importance/weight & seriousness, we place on the resurrection of Christ for the past, the present and the future, can we truly understand and appreciate the message of Easter.

The resurrection of Christ is something other than a trick of supernatural magic performed by God to excite the emotions of his disciples and to amaze and antagonize his enemies. The empty tomb of Christ contained a message that was vitally necessary for that age, for this age, and for every age until Christ comes back to receive his own.

I. The resurrection of Christ explained the meaning of his death on the cross.

As Jesus approached the end of his ministry, he began to prepare his disciples for his sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross. Such a concept was so foreign to the popular ideas concerning the Messiah that it was impossible for Jesus to convince them fully of the necessity of his death.

They did everything they could to persuade him to stay away from Jerusalem and the possibility of coming into contact with those who wanted to kill him. In spite of their efforts, Jesus persisted in his plans to go to Jerusalem. This trip was to result in the false accusations and the unjust trials that were part of the process leading to his crucifixion.

A. *For his disciples, Jesus' death was a great personal sorrow.* They had become deeply devoted to him during their days of association together. Their hearts were crushed with grief because of his death and their personal loss.

B. *Jesus' death was for his disciples a great personal disappointment.* They were hoping to reestablish the kingdom of David and the sovereignty of the nation of Israel. As they saw Jesus feed the hungry, heal the sick, and raise the dead, they were convinced that there was no way by which he could be defeated if he would raise an army. They were normal human beings who hoped for a position of prominence once that political kingdom was established. His crucifixion destroyed these hopes and dreams.

C. *Jesus' death was for them a great public tragedy, for Jesus was a very popular leader.* He had been publicly condemned as a criminal. The final and ultimate indignity to which he was subjected was death by crucifixion. We can easily understand why they fled in fear and despair.

We read that following his resurrection, "he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45 NIV). From the law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, it was revealed that Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross had been in the plan of God from the very beginning. His death was the supreme demonstration of the determination of God to redeem people from the tyranny of sin. The resurrection revealed the great price paid for our redemption.

1. Redemption by love (Rom. 5:8).
2. Redemption by substitution (1 Peter 3:18).
3. Redemption by suffering (1 Peter 2:23 – 24).

II. The resurrection of Christ was to the early disciples a dramatic demonstration of his deity.

It was this conviction that gave purpose to the church and glued the apostles together as a witnessing body to the great redemptive acts associated with the cross and the empty tomb. The disciples believed Jesus to be the unique Son of God. They had witnessed his marvelous miracles, the perfect purity of his life, and his compassionate concern for sinners. They were convinced that Jesus was no ordinary man. Nicodemus had declared Jesus to be a "teacher come from God" (John 3:2).

From a distance these disciples had witnessed the shameful treatment of the Christ by sinful humans. Their hearts were broken by his agonizing death on the cross. They were bewildered and depressed, fearful and fainting. They fled into hiding for fear of losing their lives as well. It was the resurrection that changed this situation.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans he reveals that it was the resurrection that authenticated as divine truth all that Jesus had claimed and promised. He says that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

A. *The resurrection declared Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God.* His divinity was no longer a matter of faith alone to these disciples. They now knew it to be a fact. Jesus appeared among the disciples when Thomas was present, and Thomas was bold to say, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

B. *The resurrection declared Christ to be a sinless Savior.* Because Jesus had died a substitutionary death for our sin instead of some personal sin, Luke, the author of the book of Acts, declares that it was not possible for death to hold him (Acts 2:24).

C. *The resurrection assured the apostles that Christ was a divine Savior who had died for their sins and arose that they might have life (1 Cor 15:3 – 4).*

III. The resurrection of Christ gave the disciples a companion for the road of life.

Jesus did not arise from the dead merely to give us a new doctrine, although believing in his resurrection is at the very heart of our faith. He arose from the dead to assure his disciples that he had not forsaken them and that he would continue to be with them in a very real and wonderful sense through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:18).

A. *At the very center of the disciples' faith was the conviction of the abiding presence of the living Lord who had defeated sin, death, the grave, and all the powers of evil.* This living Lord was invested with all heavenly power and authority. The effects of this conviction explain the continuation of Christianity as a living faith today.

B. *Christ's living presence controlled the disciples in moments of moral weakness.*

C. Christ's living presence challenged the disciples in the hour when tremendous effort and courage were needed.

D. Christ's living presence comforted the disciples in their times of trial and trouble. They demonstrated that Christianity is something far more than a person doing the best that he/she can. Christianity is the vital contact and fellowship of men and women with the living Christ.

A trainer of seeing-eye dogs told his blind companion as they walked across the street with her new guide dog, "Walk closer to him. He cannot guide you if you hold him at arm's length." The same is true for Christians. We must consistently and deliberately stay close to the living Christ if we want to enjoy the companionship and the infallible leadership of him who never leads us wrong.

IV. The resurrection disclosed to the disciples and to us the power that is available even today.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might know "his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 1:19 – 20 NIV).

We are in need of something more than intellectual, political, or financial power if we are to do God's work effectively in this world today. We must have access to and utilize spiritual power that Jesus declared would be available through faith in him and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. We can praise God for the availability of this divine energy for those who are obedient.

V. The resurrection of Christ is a wonderful disclosure of the gift of immortality.

Jesus had spoken to his disciples concerning the reality of eternal life, which he was able to bestow on those who trusted him. It is very unlikely that they understood what he meant by these words until after he had conquered death and the grave. He said to them:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For

as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. . . .

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:24 – 29 NIV).

When Jesus described himself as the Good Shepherd, he said that he would give his life for his sheep, and he also declared, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). Only after the resurrection could the disciples possibly understand or fully believe that Jesus had this power.

In writing to Timothy, Paul interpreted the resurrection in terms of its being a demonstration of the life and immortality that Jesus gives to those who believe the gospel (2 Tim. 1:9 – 11).

When the transfigured and glorified Christ appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos, he claimed to have sovereignty over death because of his resurrection and exaltation by God (Rev. 1:18).

On the basis of both the promises and the performance of Jesus, his friends can face death with the confidence that death shall have no final victory. In anticipation of his victory over death, Jesus had said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This truth has cheered the hearts of martyrs as they faced execution by their persecutors.

Conclusion

Christ Jesus is risen from the dead. He is present here today. He is able to save you from sin’s penalty, which is death. He is able to save you & me from sin’s power and give us victory. He is able to bring the spirit of God’s holiness and happiness into our heart’s and lives. Today we would be wise to respond to him in faith and let him become our Savior. Decide now to sit at his feet continually and let him be our Teacher. He is the Leader who will never lead us wrong. He, and he alone, can give us victory over death and the grave and the privilege of fellowship with a loving God for eternity.