

Passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

Title: The Resurrection

Big Idea: The resurrection is a truth that should excite us and focus us on our future with Christ.

Application:

Water has become a vital resource in Cape Town in recent times. Earlier this year we were on the brink of reaching day zero.

A devastating day where when we opened our taps at home...nothing would come out. No one in our city would have water.

Instead we would have to ration our supplies we bought from the shops and go cue in super long lines at various collection points in our city.

As a result water saving became vital in order to push day zero further away and to possibly avoid it completely.

Now we don't just use bricks for building we put them in our toilets to enable us to use less water.

We no longer bath instead we shower and fill buckets with water to re-use around our homes.

Some of us have installed Jo Jo tanks to gather the rare little bit of rain that falls.

And perhaps some of you are skilled enough to turn a 2 litre coke bottle and straw into a device that controls how much water you use around your basins.

Because water is vital to our existence these water saving tips and us working together to save water have become vital to our existence.

Tonight we remember that Jesus is risen! We turn our attention to the resurrection. As we do we will see that the resurrection is vital to our lives.

Whether we believe it or not the resurrection is an incredible truth that should both excite us and focus us in this life.

Jesus rising from the dead is the most incredible event in history. In fact Jesus' resurrection changed history forever. That's why the resurrection is vital to us.

Firstly tonight we will see that...

### **1. The resurrection is vital to the gospel**

Our passage tonight comes from Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians. They are a messy church and Paul tackles quite a few issues that they struggle with.

In ch15, Paul tackles our topic for tonight, the resurrection. Some people in this church believe that there is no resurrection from the dead.

Have a look at v12 with me...

*<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, "There is no resurrection of the dead"?*

Paul wants these early Christians living in Corinth to realise how vital the resurrection is to their lives. I want the same for us.

Follow with me from v1-8...

*Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.*

As Paul starts his defense against the thinking that there is no resurrection he starts by reminding these followers of the gospel.

The gospel that he preached to them, the good news of Christ. The true gospel that they received when Paul preached to them.

The good news that they are standing firm in while Paul is away and the true gospel that saves them for eternity.

Then Paul quotes a statement of faith to drive home the point that the resurrection is vital to the gospel.

As you look at the passage you can see that Paul spends a lot of time on the resurrection part.

He acknowledges Christ's death, the salvation that it brings, his burial, that Jesus really died and that it was according to God's word, it wasn't random.

Then Paul reminds them that the same scriptures that spoke of Jesus' death also spoke of Jesus' resurrection.

What's more is that Jesus appeared alive to various people in various places alive and well, Paul himself is a witness to Jesus' resurrection.

Over the Easter week end we hit the gospel hard, and rightly so. A few days ago we celebrated Good Friday.

It was a Good Friday because Jesus died for us, he died in our place. He took all our guilt, all our shame on himself. He died in our place.

Because he died we no longer have to fear death, our sins have been dealt with and we can now turn to him and live in relationship with him.

But what we need to see is that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead then his death meant nothing. Some people believe that Jesus didn't die, that he just fainted.

But the issue at hand here for Paul is not the death of Jesus, that is a given. Jesus did really die. What's at issue is the resurrection.

Paul lays down the foundations of the gospel, and a vital area of the gospel is that Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus' death means nothing if he did not rise from the dead. Then the gospel is just news, it's not good news.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead then he was a fake. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead then he was just delusional.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead then the gospel is the biggest fake news our world has ever heard in its entire history.

The resurrection is vital to the gospel we need to realise that, Jesus's death is equally important...but he didn't stay dead. Jesus is risen.

As we continue to look at the resurrection, secondly we see that...

## **2. The resurrection is vital to our faith**

*<sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; <sup>14</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, we*

*are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ—whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. <sup>19</sup> If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.*

Paul's logic is very easy for us to follow here. If the resurrection didn't happen then the gospel means nothing us we just saw.

By implication then our faith means nothing. Just because you believe something doesn't make it true, despite what the world says.

I could believe that super heroes with super powers really exist...but that doesn't make them exist in reality.

I could believe that drinking poison is good for me.

Yet it won't change the fact that drinking poison will kill me. Paul says that if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead then our faith means nothing.

The Good News the gospel brings is that Jesus dealt with our sins once and for all on the cross. But if Jesus didn't rise from the dead well then we are still responsible for our sins.

If Jesus is not risen, then we are not saved. If Jesus is not risen then we are not free. If Jesus is not risen then we have every reason to be terrified of what's coming.

If Jesus is not risen then all who have died throughout history, including Paul are just dead.

Which means that the message they preached is false...it's a lie. The apostles were just really great con men or they were completely delusional.

We are equally delusional. We might as well pack up and go home. We are to be pitied, people should feel sorry for us for being so lost.

Paul hits the nail on the head in v19...have a look...

*19 If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.*

What Paul wants his original readers and us to see is that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead then we are no better than people who believe that Elvis is still alive.

Or those who believe that the moon landing never happened or that the holocaust in world war 2 is a conspiracy.

The resurrection is vital for our faith because without it we are just a group of random people who meet together regularly for fun.

We are to be pitied by those around us because we have no hope, we are living a lie, we might as well do what Paul says at the end of v32...

*If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*

When I was at Bible College I used to work at the DVD shop on the weekends. One of the guys I worked with believed this life was it.

You lived now...then you died...that was it. I asked him why he still obeyed the rules, why he tried to be a good person?

If this world is it why not have as much fun as you can right? His answer was that it was important to be a good person...which makes no sense considering what he believed.

When I pushed him he didn't really have a good answer. If the resurrection never happened then we have nothing to look forward to, nothing to live for.

But have a look at v20...

*<sup>20</sup>But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Christ has risen. There is real evidence. It is a fact that he died and then rose from the dead. There are eye witnesses.

The resurrection is rooted in the truth of the gospel, it is rooted in our faith. This verse shows us that the resurrection of Christ proves our faith to be true.

But it also shows us that what happened with Jesus can be expected of us. This is my last point that the...

### **3. The resurrection is vital to our future**

Because Jesus has risen we have the guaranteed hope of eternity with God. We have so much to live for.

Have a look with me at v51-55...

*<sup>51</sup> Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality. <sup>54</sup> When this corruptible body is*

*clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place:*

*Death has been swallowed up in victory.*

*<sup>55</sup> Where, death, is your victory?*

*Where, death, is your sting?*

Jesus has conquered death for us. Not only has he taken away our sins, our guilt and our shame. But in his power he has conquered death so that we will not die but live.

No one can give us anything greater than eternal life and perfection. We cannot achieve anything greater than eternal life and perfection by ourselves.

The great news is that we don't have to. That's what we remember this Easter Sunday. Jesus is risen. One day we will rise with him in glory.

Then we can say where death is your victory? Where death is your sting?

What we need to constantly be reminded of is that this is not just an Easter time truth. It is an everyday truth.

Often we are bogged down with all the busyness of life. Often we get sucked in to doing lots of things, lots of good things.

We get so caught up in the here and now that we forget about our future...and then life is tough and difficult.

Vaughn Roberts in his book *Distinctives* describes the Christian life like this.

He says often we are like his sister who went on a hike with him. It was a high mountain. Eventually his sister froze, she refused to move.

She was terrified. All she did was look straight down at her feet. She refused to look anywhere else. If she only looked back she could have seen how far she had come, all the ground that had been covered.

If she looked forwards she could have seen the finish, how close it was. Looking backwards and forwards would have helped her to keep going and to finish.

A lot of the time we just look down as Christians. We are so focussed on the here and now that we don't move. We are afraid of things that in the bigger scheme of things are not that important.

Will I be able to get the latest iPhone/Samsung...will I be able to have DSTV premium for the world cup...will my child be able to go to Bishops/Bosch/Wynberg/UCT...will I be able to move to Claremont...will I be able to make first team/represent my province.

Other things that might make us look down would be what people may think of us, how people may treat us if they knew we loved Jesus.

Jesus has risen. We will rise with him in glory. Death has been defeated. In comparison the things I listed earlier don't really matter.

The resurrection should fill us with the greatest confidence and inexpressible joy. Looking down is dangerous.

Instead we should continually be looking back to the cross where Jesus won a great victory for us. Which should remind us where we came from.

And then look forward to our future where we will be with God for all eternity. That's what we strive for that's what will keep us going.

That's why this life still matters...have a look at the first part of v34...

*<sup>34</sup> Come to your senses and stop sinning;*

The danger of realising the greatness of the resurrection is that we can start thinking that this life no longer matters. That our sin doesn't matter.

The resurrection is vital to our future and therefore should affect how we live now.

Have a look at the last few great verses of this passage reading from v56...

*<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

Death has been dealt with, sin has been dealt with. Therefore we are to be thankful to God for the victory Christ won on our behalf.

Everyday, we have we should be thanking God. Often if we are honest we are quite good at telling God about the things we don't have...that we really need.

This is what occupies our prayers, our wants and needs. Actually God has given us everything we really need. Everything we will ever need.

God hasn't held back. God gave us his one and only perfect son who died for us so that we don't have too. Then because his son died for us and then rose from death we now have eternal life.

Praise the Lord. He has given us victory. Victory we didn't deserve. Next time when you think life is unfair, or you are grumpy with God because you didn't get what you wanted...remember that he has given you everything...you have it...it's yours.

This resurrection is what should drive us daily...Our future is set...our eternal future is guaranteed. Jesus is already there waiting for us it's that sure.

My mother in law told me a while ago that she was chatting to this very rich lady. This lady had it all. She told my mother in law that she could fly anywhere she wanted in the world.

She said she could buy whatever she wanted. There was nowhere she couldn't go and nothing she couldn't do. It was the same with her friends.

To the world she is a winner. But she told my mother in law that her friends seem shallow, and that she feels empty. In this world she has it all and yet she is still empty.

Jesus is risen. In the risen Christ we have everything. We have much more than anyone in this world and it can never be taken because it is kept in eternity for us.

We are not to be pitied we are a privileged people, we are extremely rich in Christ. The resurrection is vital for our future and should keep us focussed in this life.

We strive to reach out to the world around us, because Jesus is risen and he is coming back and when he does that will be the end.

We have hope for the empty and the lost we have the glorious truth of the gospel. The world around us is filled with lost people heading for destruction and death.

We all have family and friends we know who haven't turned to Jesus yet, who are hopeless and lost.

We have answers for those around us, we have the best news the world needs to hear.

Let's remember that the resurrection is vital to the gospel, it is vital to our faith and it is vital to our future. As we do let's stand firm in this incredible truth.

Let those around us see the great joy we have because our King Jesus has won us eternal life. We must stand firm and not hide away.

Jesus is risen. Hallelujah.

Let's pray.