

John 20:1-18 - Resurrection Sunday, March 31st, 2013

John 20:1-18 NIV Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (2) So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" (3) So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. (4) Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. (5) He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. (6) Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, (7) as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. (8) Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (9) (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (10) Then the disciples went back to their homes, (11) but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb (12) and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. (13) They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." (14) At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. (15) "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." (16) Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). (17) Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (18) Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- I'm beginning today's sermon with the presupposition that most of you would agree, resurrection Sunday is the biggest day of the year.
- I'm also presupposing that most of you know why the celebration of Christ's resurrection is of paramount importance for us as believers.
- The fact of the matter is, if Christ was not resurrected then we are fools to be pitied and as such we should just all get up, and go home.

1 Corinthians 15:1-22 NKJV (1) Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ... (12) Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. (14) And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. (15) Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. (16) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. (17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (18) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (20) But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a brief moment, because I think I would be grossly remiss were I not to take care of first things first.
- By that I mean; it's incumbent upon me to first address what it means to be saved. Absent this, my sermon could give you a false hope.
- In other words, just because someone thinks they're going to heaven, and or says they're going to heaven, doesn't mean that they will.

- What I would like to do is give you a two-question test that will determine whether or not you are saved, and as such going to heaven.
- Actually, I had first become acquainted with this test back in the 1990's through D. James Kennedy, who's since gone to be with the Lord.
- I found the website, which is simply, are-you-going.com, so for those who may be interested in passing this on to friends and loved ones.

- The first question is; "Do you believe that you will go to heaven when you die?" A - Yes, B - no, C - I hope so, or D - I'm not sure.
- The second question is; "Why do you believe this?" A - I've tried to keep the 10 commandments, B - I go to church, C - I believe in God.
- D - I'm basically a good person, E - I've done the best I could, F - I've never hurt anyone, or G - Other, what best describes your answer.

- This may come as a surprise to you, but according to the Bible, none of the answers in the previous box will get someone into heaven.
- The reason being is that none of us can be good enough to meet God's perfect standard of righteousness and earn our way to heaven.
- It's been said that there will be a lot of good people in hell, and a lot of bad people in heaven, this because we're not saved by our works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— (9) not by works, so that no one can boast.

- With this understanding we can now turn a corner so as to look at why it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ is of the utmost importance.
- Now, having said that, please know, I am keenly aware the resurrection celebration presents the opportunity for an invitation to salvation.
- However, I've sensed from the Lord the need to devote the remainder of our time to talk more about the resurrection for us as believers.
- I believe by doing this, the Holy Spirit will minister to those who are not believer's vis-à-vis the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- That said, let's look at what the resurrection means for us as born again believers in Jesus Christ, while we are still living in this evil world.
- At the risk of sounding provocative and hyper-sensational, we're on the brink of disaster the likes of which man has never before seen.
- This world is doomed and damned as it heads for sudden destruction at breakneck speed. Were it not for the resurrection, it's hopeless.

- Having said that; let me hasten to say this, for us as believers, we have the hope of the resurrection in that this world is not our home.
- This blessed hope makes Christ's resurrection such a magnificent celebration. We're one resurrection Sunday closer to the rapture.
- I want to share with you three facts concerning Jesus Christ's resurrection as it relates to these last days in which we are now living.

#1. Eternal life, for us as believers, commenced the very same day we were born again of the Spirit of God. This is as bad as it will get.
- You've heard it said that for believers, this is the most hell we'll ever know, but for unbelievers, this is the most heaven they'll ever know.
- I'd like to quote from a book in my library, and I'll reluctantly tell you that the title is, "One Thousand Thoughts for Funeral Occasions."

Quoting one Lyman Abbot, "Set aside, if you have ever had it, the notion that immortal or eternal life is something to come by and by, after you have died, and risen from the dead. Understand that immortality is a present possession. ...You must seek this immortal life here, and seek it from the God Who is here, and seek it through the channels that He opens for you... We must have the immortal life here and now if we would have a rational hope to have it hereafter."

#2. Death, for us as believers, was dealt its final and fatal blow on the very same day that Jesus Christ, that third day, rose from the grave.
- This truth concerning the resurrection is deeply personal for those of us who have tasted from the bitter cup of the death of a loved one.
- Yes it's bittersweet in the sense that they're in the presence of the Lord, however the fact of the matter is, death is the destiny of all of us.

Ecclesiastes 7:2 NKJV Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that *is* the end of all men; And the living will take *it* to heart.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 NIV (51) Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— (52) in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (53) For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (54) When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." (55) "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Quoting again from *One Thousand Thoughts for Funeral Occasions*, one so aptly wrote, "A man goes to bed willingly and cheerfully, because he believes he shall rise again the next morning, and be renewed in his strength. Confidence in the resurrection would make us go to the grave as cheerfully as we go to our beds."

#3. Our resurrection to eternal life is so good that it has to be true. In other words, our resurrection to eternal life is not to good to be true.
- Let me explain, we're all prone to think if there's no such thing as a free lunch, then there's no such thing as the free gift of eternal life.
- The fact of the matter is, the free gift of eternal life is true because it was paid for in full by the one Who is the way, the truth and the life.

Of this George Sand writes, "The very magnificence of the Christian hope is sometimes felt by us as a difficulty, we are tempted to think it too grand to be true, rather it is too grand to be false, ...as it is in the sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life."

John 11:1-26 NIV Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (2) This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. (3) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." (4) When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." (5) Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. (6) Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. (7) Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." (8) "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" (9) Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. (10) It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." (11) After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." (12) His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." (13) Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. (14) So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, (15) and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." (16) Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (17) On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. (18) Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, (19) and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. (20) When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. (21) "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (22) But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." (23) Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." (24) Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (25) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; (26) and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

- I'd like to close a little differently than we usually do by encouraging you to spend a little bit of time in prayer and worship before we leave.