Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

If Christ Didn't Rise--Then What?
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Code: 1278

I don't suppose that all of you had this experience, but some of you might have...Wanting to keep up on current issues as to how Christ is being treated, I turned on the television the other day to watch at least the closing part of The Day Christ Died...I watched as it came to the point of crucifixion. They laid the actor on the crossbeam who was playing the part of Christ, and then one of the Roman soldiers lifted his mallet and came down with a crashing blow to drive the nail through one of the hands. At that point, the actor...lunged upward, and his mouth flew open, and he let out a scream, and the camera froze still, and they ran the credits, and that was the end. How tragic. How false. How untrue. That is not the story.

A year ago at this time I had the privilege of being in Glasgow, Scotland, with my wife...and I was reminded of that in recent days when some friends have come from Scotland here...and of an account I read of a certain man who was visiting the art museum in Glasgow, and he was walking along looking at the pictures, and he came to one picture, and in front of it was a little fella with wide eyes gazing up...at the picture transfixed. The man watched him for a moment, and he stayed there quite a long time without moving, and the man walked up and put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Son, what picture is that?" "Why, sir," replied the lad, "don't you know? That's the picture of our Lord dying on the cross for our sins."...The man said, "Thank you, Son." Went on his way. As he walked down the hall looking at other pictures, he stopped in front of one particular picture and hadn't hardly begun to examine it until he felt a little tug at his sleeve. He looked down, and there found himself gazing into the soft eyes of the same little fella he'd seen a few minutes before. He said, "What is it, Son?" He said, "Pardon me, sir, I forgot to tell you the rest. He didn't stay on the cross. He rose, you know," and that is the rest; and without that, there is no Christianity...

You see, the resurrection is the heart of everything...C.F. Evans, a contemporary writer, has said, "To a greater extent than it is anything else, Christianity is a religion of the resurrection. More than anything else, we count on the reality of the resurrection. It is attacked. It is denied. It is ridiculed. It is ignored. It is explained away constantly, because it is the vital point in Christian faith that holds up everything else; and, naturally, the enemy hits at that reality." For the Christian, Easter is far more than eggs and rabbits and new hats and clothes and spring and whatever. For us, Easter is not the worship of a Astarte. By the way, that's where the word Easter comes from. Astarte, who was the goddess of spring, the Old Testament gives her the name Ashtoreth. Supposedly the mother Baal. We don't worship some pagan goddess who, by the way, was called the queen of heaven and of whom it was believed by the Egyptians was dropped out of heaven in a giant egg, landed in the Nile

River, and was pushed to the shore by some very cooperative fish. The egg rolled its way up onto the shore and cracked open, and out came the queen of heaven, Ashtoreth, Semeramis, Astarte. Celebrating her came the festival of Easter...and eggs...and spring; but that isn't what it is for us.

It is resurrection, and if it is not that, it is nothing at all. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basic cornerstone of all Christian faith, and it is the hope of all human history. If there is no resurrection, there is nothing to hope for. Now, I'm very much aware of the attacks on the resurrection, because I see them constantly. They come through the media. They come through books. They come in instruction given in liberal seminaries. They come by those who are the very enemies of Christianity. The denials and so forth are wholesale throughout the history of the church. Now, we can understand that, because this is where Christianity must be destroyed if it is to be destroyed - at the point of the resurrection of Christ.

Let's assume then that the critics are right for a few moments. Let's assume that Jesus didn't rise, that His flesh whatever may possibly be left of it is still rotting in some long ago forgotten Palestinian tomb. He never came out of the grave at all. Then what? Let's assume that all there is is spring and rabbits and eggs and hats and make the best of it. Then what? If Christ didn't rise, then what? For an answer to that question, look at 1 Corinthians chapter 15, 1 Corinthians chapter 15...The Apostle Paul postulates this very issue and then proceeds to show the consequence if Christ didn't rise; and, beloved, this is just why we defend so vigorously the resurrection of Christ. For if Christ doesn't rise, as you will see this morning, everything that we count on is lost. Everything. Behind the issue in 1 Corinthians 15 was a historical problem in the city of Corinth. In fact, throughout the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul is discussing problems in the Corinthian church, problems which had arisen because they had allowed their thinking to be conditioned by certain pagan beliefs around them. They were victimized by the human philosophies which made up the most part of their lives before they were saved; and, even having become Christians, they had still been holding onto some of these old beliefs; and there were some in their midst who were not true believers and held tenaciously to these old forms of pagan religion while carrying out a form of Christianity only.

Among the many philosophical drifts that had found their way into the Corinthian assembly was this one. The Greeks taught that there was no such thing as a physical, bodily, fleshly resurrection. They didn't believe that. They denied that...It was part and parcel of their philosophy that spirit was good and flesh was evil; and the epitome of attaining good was to abandon the flesh. To then be reborn in the flesh, resurrected in the flesh, would be to enter a second incarceration. To enter again into the tomb of the body. To enter again into a second kind of captivity, a second hell. For the Greeks, to escape the body was everything. For example, the Stoics believed that the infinite deity, the infinite mind of the universe was some infinite fire; and a little spark of that fire found its way into the heart of every human; and when that human died, that spark returned to the infinite deity. The body wasted away in the grave. They had absolutely no belief in a physical resurrection.

That is why, for example, when the Apostle Paul was preaching on Mars Hill to the erudite philosophers of the city of Athens, and his message was a message of resurrection, they were so shocked and so taken aback by it. For example, in Acts 17 in verse 18, "Certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics encountered him. And said, 'What will this babbler say?' Others said, 'He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods. Gods that we don't know about...Why?...because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." Over in verse 32, it says, "And when they heard of the resurrection, some mocked and others said, 'We'll hear you again regarding this matter.'" In other words, this was not a part of Greek philosophical religious belief. They believed in the immortality of the soul, much as reincarnation is believed today, but did not believe in the resurrection of the body.

Plato himself taught that the human body was a prison, and man should long to escape that prison. Selsus, in 220 A.D., said, "To believe in a physical resurrection is to have the hope of worms. Who would ever desire...he said...to wish to return in the body that had rotted." They had no perception, and so some of the Corinthians were saying, "The dead rise not. Everything is spiritual. The dead don't really rise." And so Paul approaches this issue right here...Notice how he begins in verse 12. "Now if Christ be preached, that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no literally resurrection of corpses?" It is the word here for corpse. "Some of you are saying there is no resurrection of corpses." The definite article is not there in the original. "Some of you are saying there's no physical resurrection. But if Christ be preached, that He rose from the dead, how can you say that?" And, by the way, that is precisely what is preached about Christ; and that is the content of the eleven verses preceding.

The chapter begins as I read at the beginning of our time together this morning that Paul says, "This is the Gospel: that Jesus died, that He was buried, that He rose again, and that He was seen by all of these people...verse 11...and that is what we preach; and that is what you believe. Now, if that is the heart of the message, that Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how can you say there is no resurrection of corpses? You cannot certainly say, 'I'm a Christian. I just don't believe in the resurrection,' and yet that is what some would wish to do. They would want to say that Christ rose in a spiritual way or a soulish way or His influence arose or He is alive insofar as we retain His writings and the spirit of what He said." But he is saying, "It is a resurrection of flesh, of corpses of which we speak, and how you possibly say, 'I'm a Christian,' and deny that when that is exactly the heart and soul of the Gospel? We will not relinquish the literal, physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ."

There can be no giving in at this point; because, if we do, if we give in and say there's no resurrection, a series of sequential things will take place that are utterly devastating. Watch them as we flow through the text. If Christ didn't rise, if there's no resurrection of the dead, if corpses stay in the grave and rot, what are the consequences? Now, let's watch how Paul frames the argument.

First of all, he comes off of their philosophical orientation that they believe there's no resurrection of corpses. Bodies don't rise. Spirits do, but not bodies. They just rot. Point 1, the first consequence to that belief: Christ is not risen. If you believe there's no resurrection of corpses, then Christ isn't risen. Look at verse 13. "But if there be no resurrection of corpses, then is Christ not risen." That is the first and, by the way, monumental deduction. If you're gonna deny a literal physical bodily resurrection of human beings, then Christ didn't rise; and what Paul is affirming here is that Christ is, in every sense, human. He is a Man, the 100 percent God. God of very gods, equal to God in glory and essence. He is nonetheless 100 percent human. Human in the fullest capacity of humanness; and if you deny a literal physical bodily resurrection of the dead, then you are stuck with the fact that Christ isn't risen, because He is a Man. He died as other men die. If He doesn't rise, then there are terrible things which result.

Now, listen, the Bible tells us Christ was a Man. There are many who have taught that He was not, that he was something less than human. There were philosophers at this time, the Gnostics, who believed that He was some kind of an ethereal floating spirit that attached Himself temporarily to a physical form; but we believe He was a Man. In Acts 20...Acts 2:22, it says, "He was a Man approved of God." In 1 Corinthians 15 verse 21, it says, "For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection. As in Adam, all die. So in Christ they're all made alive." He is as much a Man as Adam was; and we all know Adam was a man, for he fathered us. In Galatians 4:4, it says, "In due time, He was born of a woman." In 1 Timothy 2:5, it says that, "There is one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." In Hebrews 2:17, it says, "He was made like His brethren." Who are they? Same chapter. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." In Mark 6, He is noted as the Son of Mary. He is called a carpenter. They said of Him in John 19, "Behold, the Man." In 1 John 1, John says, "That which we have seen and heard and our hands have handled concerning the word of life, declare we unto you, 'He was visible. He was audible, and He was touchable.'" He was a Man. He was conceived in a woman's womb. He was born in a human manner. He was circumcised. He possessed a human soul. He possessed a human body. He grew in wisdom and stature. He was seen weeping and hungering and thirsting and sleeping and growing weary. He felt sorrow. He felt grief. He was beaten with fists. He was whipped. He was nailed to a cross. He died. He had His side pierced. He was buried, and He came out of the grave and was seen by over 500 people. He was a Man; and if we say there's no resurrection, then Christ didn't rise, because He will not rise as something other than He is, and He's a Man...

Just to make very sure that everyone understood that at the of the Book of Luke, the Lord puts on a demonstration that is remarkable indeed. Beginning in verse 33, He makes one of His post-resurrection appearances to the disciples gathered in Jerusalem; and it says, "They rose up the same hour, returned to Jerusalem...that is the two who met Him on the road to Emmaus...and they found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.'" And they told what things were done along the way and how He was known to them and the breaking of bread. "And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst

of them and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you.' But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit." They were skeptical, too, like a lot of other folks. "And He said unto them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold, My hands and My feet, that is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.' And when He had thus spoke and He showed them His hands and His feet, and while they yet believed not for joy and wondered, He said unto them, 'Have ye here anything to eat?' And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb, and He took it and did eat before them."

This was an incredible demonstration of His humanness, that He was alive in a physical body...Paul's point is this: If men don't rise, Jesus didn't rise. That's devastating. Having made that point, he follows with this one. Listen. "And if Christ did not rise, all Gospel preaching is useless." Verse 14, "And if Christ be not risen, if He didn't rise, then is our preaching useless, void, null, empty, meaningless, folly." Listen, the heart of the Gospel, the heart of all apostolic preaching is the resurrection, verses 1 to 11 of this chapter. "This is what we preach...he says in verse 11...the resurrection; and if Christ didn't rise, all our preaching is useless." The whole Gospel is subverted. You don't have a Gospel without a resurrection. You have a dead rabbi, that's all, nothing more. There is no Good News. It's bad news, folks. I'm here to tell you that the one who thought he could pull it off, couldn't; and he rotted in a Palestinian tomb; and it's over.

The sad part is the Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Our only hope was in Him. There is no salvation under any other, and if He didn't pull it off, it's over. There's nobody else. All our preaching is empty. Paul says in Romans 1 that, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," and if there was no resurrection, there was no power. There is no declaration. He is not the Son of God. Pack it up and leave. It's folly. I've wasted my life. So has every other preacher who ever uttered the Gospel...if Christ is not risen. We're not toying with some peripheral truth. We're hitting at the very heart of the matter.

Romans 14, it says, "That He arose to be the Lord of the living." If He didn't rise, He's not the Lord of the living, and we have no Lord. We have no Savior, because if He didn't rise, the Father didn't approve of His work; and if the Father didn't approve of His work and validate that through His resurrection, then He didn't do His work, and there is no atonement and no redemption and no justification and no nothing. Our preaching is useless. That's pretty powerful. If you do not believe in resurrection, then Christ doesn't rise; and if Christ doesn't rise, all Gospel preaching is empty.

Thirdly, the consequence, Christ does not rise. All Gospel preaching is useless, and faith is empty. Verse 14, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Verse 17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." Now think through this. This is very simple, and the message today is very simple. I only wanna point to the centrality of the resurrection as Paul does in reverse. If Christ doesn't rise, then all Gospel preaching is useless, and so is your response to it.

Folks, this is a big delusion. Christianity is the biggest rip-off yet. If Christ didn't rise, we have put our faith in nothing. For in order to be a believer in Christ, in order to be a Christian, Paul says, "You must confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God hath...what?...raised Him from the dead." And if you have believed that and banked your life and eternity on it, and it isn't true, your faith is useless...Useless.

You see, if Christ is dead, He can't save us, and we're believing in something that's an absolute illusion. The Gospel is a sham, and so is the faith that it produces, and we might as well chime in with the Psalmist in Psalm 73:13, who said, "I have cleansed my heart in vain." Or we might borrow the words of Isaiah in chapter 49 verse 4, when he said, "I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing." Your faith is silly folly. All of the rigidity of your commitment to Christ, all of the endeavor to live Biblical principles, all of the...the goodness of your life toward other people, all of the strictures you have applied to be obedient to God is nothing but idiocy if Christ doesn't rise, because there is no Christian faith. There is no Lord of the living. There is no eternal home in Heaven. There's nothing.

Abel, who believed God, was a fool. Enoch never walked with God. Noah, the ultimate fool, 120 years to build a boat in an act of obedience to God...would spend eternity in hell. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Gideon, Sampson, Barak, Jephthah, all the heroes who placed their faith in God in anticipation of a coming redemptive work were fools. God lied. Every sacrificial lamb that pictured the death of that ultimate and final lamb was an empty dream. It never happened if Christ didn't rise. I read of the martyrs, so many of them, of whom says the writer of Hebrews these amazing words, "Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn asunder. They were tested, slain with a sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. They were all fools, if Christ is not risen. Their faith is utter folly."...

It was an incredible faith, too. A faith that let them put their head on the block and have it severed from their body. It makes absolute idiots out of the disciples, who went out and at least eleven of twelve of them died for their faith in Christ, sacrificing their life because of boldness to proclaim it, and they were under an illusion. Fools, if Christ didn't rise...The Gospel is useless. Our faith is empty.

Fourthly, the apostles are liars, verse 15. Listen to it. "Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." In other words, Paul says, "We're false witnesses." The word "found" is a word that

indicates we have now been drawn into the courtroom, and the apostles are to stand up and give testimony, and they are to give testimony about the validity of God's Word, and the resurrection of God's Son; and they have said it's true, but they are liars, Paul says, if He didn't rise. People say, "Oh, you know, the Bible's a wonderful book. Oh, we don't believe all of it." But the men meant well. Good religious men. The liberal people like to say that. "You know, they were good religious men who were sharing their religious experience." Listen, they were either telling the truth or telling lies. They are either truthful, or they are liars. Paul says, "If there's no resurrection, people who say there is are lying."

It's a pretty simple thing with me. I open my Bible, and the Bible says, "Jesus rose from the dead," that is either true or it's false. If it is true, then they are to be believed. If it is false, they are liars. But don't come with any of that patronizing nonsense: they're just good, mistaken, religious men. Good, mistaken, religious men don't say, "I saw Jesus with my own eyes," if it isn't true; and, earlier in the chapter, he says all of these things. "He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve, then by 500, then by James, then by all the apostles, and then by me," and he saw Him a couple of times. He was seen. Either they tell the truth, or they don't.

In Acts chapter 1 verse 22, when they were selecting someone to take the place of Judas, the one they selected to fill in the ranks of the twelve had to be one who was an eyewitness of the resurrection. You couldn't even be involved in the apostolic community without having seen and known and touched the resurrected Christ. Now, beloved, when they then wrote of His resurrection, they either told the truth or they told a lie...And if they are liars, why should I believe anything they say? If they would like about the resurrection, why should I believe they'd tell the truth about hell? Why should I believe they tell the truth about sin? Why should I believe anything they say about obedience, about blessing, about anything else? If I can't trust them with the greatest truth of Christianity, why should I trust them with anything else?

Listen, it is a monumental issue regarding the resurrection of Christ. If Christ is not risen, Gospel preaching is useless. Faith is empty. Apostles are liars. The whole system comes crashing down...Look at verse 16, "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised," and, there, Paul goes back to his first point. The major issue with him is, if you're gonna deny a bodily resurrection, you've just eliminated Christ...

Let's go to a fifth. If there's no resurrection, Christ is not risen. Gospel preaching is useless. Faith is empty. Apostles are liars; and, fifthly, sin's power is unbroken. Verse 17, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain...why?...because you are yet in...what?...your sins." Did you hear that? If Christ isn't risen, you are still captive to the deadly sphere where your sin will damn you to hell forever. You see, the one thing we need is a Savior from sin, isn't it? We're drowning people. We need someone to save us. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, He failed. If He didn't go into combat with death...and win, He failed. If He didn't go into combat with Satan who, according to Hebrews 2, has the power of

death and win, He failed. If he didn't go into hell as Colossians tells us and announce His triumph and come back out, He failed. The Bible says he conquered sin. He conquered Satan, and He conquered hell.

Now, if He didn't rise, He lost. Sin won. Satan won, and hell is still holding a carnival over the victory. If there's no resurrection, sin is still on every man; and the only place we'll ever occupy through eternity is hell. There can be no forgiveness, you see, until the penalty is paid. How do you know if you've paid the penalty? By the approval of the Father. When the Father brought Christ out of the grave, that was the Father's way of approving His work. In Romans chapter 4 verse 25, it says, "He was raised for our justification." He is honored by the Father in His resurrection. The Father has brought Him through the grave and out the other side because He was pleased with what He did.

In the 6th chapter of Romans, it's a great section. It shows how Christ went into the grave bearing our sin, and then it says, "He was raised up...Romans 6:4...from the dead by the glory of the Father." In other words, the Father was approving. The Father accepted His perfect work, and the Father lifted Him out of the grave. "And so...says Paul...He is made unto us wisdom and sanctification and righteousness and redemption." He could never save us unless He came out of the grave. The Bible tells us in Romans 5:10, "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." In other words, His death reconciles us, and His life keeps us. If He's not alive, He can't keep us. I love that point that Paul makes. He is saying if His death had the power to save us, then imagine how His life has the power to keep us. If in being dead He can save, imagine what He can do when being alive...in keeping us. But there is no redemption. There is no salvation. There is no preservation if Christ didn't rise. And those haunting, pensive darts that were cast into the minds of the Jews by Jesus in John 8 when He said, "You shall die in your sins," are true of every man who ever lived if Christ didn't rise...You see, if Christ didn't rise, it's all over for us. Everything is over...

Paul adds a sixth sequential conclusion in verse 18..."The dead in Christ have perished." Look at it. "Then they also who are fallen asleep...that's a Christian term for dying...Those who have died in Christ are perished." This is a logical connection. Mark it. If there's no resurrection of bodies, then Christ didn't rise. If Christ didn't rise, all of our Gospel preaching is useless, and your response to it in faith is just as useless, and you are still trapped in the folly of your faith listening to false witnesses, believing their lies, and you are locked inevitably and forever in your sin, and the consequence of that is that the people who already died with their faith in Christ are damned. That's a shocking conclusion...Think of it. Hell is occupied by Peter, Paul, James, Stephen, Philip, Cornelius...Hell is occupied by Augustine, Martin Luther, D.L. Moody, every great saint that ever lived, every martyr that ever died for Jesus Christ, every missionary, every pastor, every dear mother and father and child that put their faith in Christ and has already died, they're all in hell burning forever, cursing the God they were deluded about, if Christ didn't rise.

Because it is only because He lives that we shall...what?...live also. If He rotted in a Palestinian grave, and His soul was sent to hell, captive to the enemy, that's what'll happen to us, if He didn't rise. Beloved, this is very antithesis of the Christian hope. This is utterly unacceptable. Paul says in Philippians 1, "I wish to depart and be with Christ." That's our hope, isn't it? We love His appearing. We look for the day when the anchor that's already anchoring us in Heaven, as Hebrews says, is gonna be rolled in, as it were, and we enter His presence. That's our hope. At the end of the 15th chapter, Paul swells and says, "O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?" We believe there is no victory in death, because Christ has broken its power, and Peter and James and John and Paul and Stephen and Philip and Augustine and all the rest of 'em up until modern times and all the martyrs of all the ages who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints of the time before the cross, they're all in His presence right now, because He did rise. He rose to lift us up to Himself.

So in a crushing argument, Paul shows the horrible consequences of denying a resurrection. Christ is not risen. Gospel preaching is useless. Faith is empty. Apostles are liars. Sin is unforgiven, and the dead believers are damned; and one more: Christians are the world's most pitiful people. Did you get that? Christians are the world's most pitiful people. Verse 19, and I'll read it to you the way it should be in the original, "If in this life we have hope in Christ only...and the word <u>monon</u>is the key word, only...If in this life we have hope in Christ only, we are of all men the most pitiful." There's one thing about Christianity. It's a total thing. When you come to Christ, you don't take Christ plus some other system. It is Christ all in all and nothing else, right? We are committed absolutely and totally to Him. So we have hope in Christ only. That's the strength of the text. We, as Christians, have hope in Christ only. If that doesn't pan out, we have missed it.

You can't say, "I'm telling you something now. I have embraced Buddhism, Shintoism, Islam, Christianity, and just to be sure, I'm a Moonie. One of those five I figure is right." Can't do that, can you? To say yes to Christ is to say no to everything else. True? To embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is to set aside every other religious system in the world; and I'll tell you something, people, you have hope in Christ only. Period. Paragraph. And if it doesn't pan out, you lose; and if Christ didn't rise, we're the most pitiful bunch in the world, because that's the only thing we have banked our time and eternity on. That's Paul's concluding statement. Christians are tragic, pitiful fools. Like people on a party on a ship headed for a disaster...

But, thank God for that, huh? Verse 20, the affirmation, "Now is Christ risen from the dead." Paul turns the thing all the way around. All of that was not true. Christ is risen; and if Christ is risen, then what? Then just the opposite is true. Everything is in reverse. Gospel preaching is valuable. Faith is priceless. The apostles spoke the truth. Sin is forgiven. The dead in Christ are with Him, and Christians are the most glorious people in the world. If Christ is risen; but the whole thing hinges on that...

Listen, the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves to me that He conquered sin and death in hell. Someone wrote, "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'm sore afraid, and yet I don't know why.' I heard two women weeping as down the hill they came. The 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, 'Christ hath conquered, conquered all, O Heaven and earth, rejoice.'"...

During the war years in London...a church had established a great harvest thanksgiving service for a certain Saturday evening, inviting all the people to come, and they did; and they brought corn as a token of the harvest; and they placed it there in the center of the church...After the service was over, they went, leaving it there, and that night, the church was bombed and gutted. Nothing remained but stone and rubble. Devastation had occurred in an air raid. The months passed on. As the spring came, some people noticed that there were some shoots coming up through the floor of what was once the church; and by summer, amazingly enough, there was a crop of corn, a little patch flourishing in the midst of the devastation. I believe that the cross, Satan unloaded the bombs; but it wasn't long before the indestructible seed of life sprang forth from the ground; and because He lives, you shall live also. Let's pray.

While your head's bowed for just a moment, in Acts chapter 17...it said, "When they preached the resurrection, some mocked. Some delayed, and said, 'We'll hear again of this,' and some believed." Those are all the alternatives you have. To mock, be skeptical; to delay, postpone it; or to believe. Thank God I believe by His grace. So do most of you. I'm sure in our fellowship this morning there are some who have not believed. Maybe you've postponed it. Maybe you've been skeptical. May I say to you that there is no hope of life here and now or in eternity apart from Christ. You say, "Well, John, what do I have to do to appropriate His resurrection life?" I said it earlier. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, and you'll be saved.

If you wanna see your life transformed, if you want your life to come into harmony with God's glory and His will, it's a matter in your own heart of commitment. I can't think of any more wonderful thing that could ever happen on an Easter than for someone to be raised from the dead spiritually. Simply in your heart express that desire to God, and He'll answer it. We have a prayer room up here in the front to my right. When we dismiss in just a moment, the prayer room will be open; and they're waiting for you there. For you that would like to come and open your heart to Christ, for you Christians who wanna come to pray, for you that are looking for a church to unite with in order to have fellowship and fullness of ministry, and God's called you to Grace Church. You come, too. These are

folks whose lives have been changed by Christ, and they just wanna be available to you. Don't go away without knowing Him. Don't go away denying the resurrection and denying your eternal life. Don't go away saying no to all the hope there is. Say yes to Christ.

Father, we pray that You'll speak to the hearts of all who are here, that they might come forward into the prayer room and the counseling room, settle the matter of eternity with You. Thank You for this blessed day. Ohhhhh, the music still rings in our hearts. The music of resurrection, the message, the wonder of it all. Thank You. Thank You that we're alive, not with human life only, but with divine life, and that it's forever. Thank You for all You've meant to us and are to us and ever shall be; and we pray for every life here, that none will pillow his head in sleep tonight without an affirmation of faith in the risen Christ. Bring us together again tonight, Father, for hearts to be filled and blessed through Your Word...And now may the grace of God, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit of God be with us now and until we meet again. Amen.

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