

In case you missed the announcement — and it would be really hard to do that — **today** is Easter Sunday... And this is my 25th Easter Sermon! So, it is possible, that some of the things that I will say today, you probably have heard before!

Easter Sunday — the day when we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. It is — without doubt — **THE** most important event that we celebrate in the church year — so important, that in one church — they generally require people to attend at least once a year — on Easter — in order to maintain their membership in the church.

We know that it is important because the events that we celebrate on Easter Day — the resurrection of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead — is the **keystone** of our Christian faith. Simple put, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead — there is no Christianity... there is no Christian faith... we might as well go home and eat our Easter candy... we might as well put on our Easter bonnets with all the frills upon it and go march in the Easter parade — if Christ is not risen from the dead.

The Apostle Paul stressed the importance of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-19 — what is known as the great resurrection chapter — and I would encourage you to read the whole chapter.

In summary, some of the things that he says aren't true if there is no resurrection. Without the resurrection then our preaching is empty and our faith is also empty — the KJV says that our faith is in vain — it is useless. In addition, without the resurrection we are false witnesses of God — because we believe that Jesus rose from the dead — in other words we are liars and frauds — and the same is true of all Christians throughout the ages.

And even further we are still in our sins and we are dead and open to the wrath of God — because we believe that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead means that God accepted his sacrifice for our sins.

And the concluding words in 1 Corinthians are — *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”* — in other words — if we think that we have something and we really don't — then we are really to be pitied — people should feel sorry for us — because we believe that we have forgiveness of our sins... we believe all the other doctrines of the Christian faith... we believe that we have hope — when in reality we have nothing.

That is why I said that if there is no resurrection we might as well go home and eat our Easter candy... and go march in the Easter parade — because there is no need for us to be here at all.

And that is why anyone who calls themselves a Christian and does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is not a Christian — because simply there is no Christianity without the resurrection.

We believe that Christ is risen from the dead — and that we serve a risen Savior. The proof of the resurrection is abundant — is as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 in the Apostle Paul's

summary of the gospel: *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.”*

If one, two or even 10 people say they saw the risen Christ — there would be room to doubt — but over 500 people saw him at once. Now, either lots of people were smoking something — or they really did see the risen Christ. And remember, Jesus was here on earth for 40 days following the resurrection and he made numerous appearances to a multitude of people.

In addition to this there is the other evidence from the scriptures — for example, we read about the guards being bribed to say that the disciples stole the body.

There is also the evidence of the disciples themselves — The main thing being that the resurrection changed them from a group of men who were hiding for their very lives to the greatest evangelistic team that the world has ever know — and secondly — all of the disciples, with the exception of John were put to death for their faith in the risen Christ.

And so the question could be rightly asked — who would die for a dead man? The answer is no one would die for someone that they knew was still dead — but they knew that he was alive because he had appeared to them.

There is also the evidence from history — lives changed, music, art, buildings — and we could go on and on. But the truth remains that the fact of the resurrection is there — it is not a myth or a fairy tale — but hard fact. It is harder for me to believe that there is no resurrection than for me to believe that there was.

And so the only option that is believable is that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead — that he is no longer in the tomb — and that he indeed has ascended into heaven, waiting to come again.

So, as Christians — as 21st Century Christians — we accept the resurrection as fact — as a truth — because if we really think about it — we realize that without the resurrection all that we are and that we believe is useless and utterly worthless.

BUT... but we must ask then — what effect does the resurrection of Christ mean for us as Christians in our everyday lives? Is it just a great theological truth — or does it have an effect as we live our lives in this world?

Turn with me to Colossians 3 — our Epistle lesson for this morning. Here the Apostle Paul summarizes what we should do with the truth that if we are Christians and believe that Christ rose from the dead — then, he says, this is what we are to do: Colossians 3:1-4 (READ).

Note first that the Apostle Paul says: *“If then you were raised with Christ...”* — We know that Christ has been raised from the dead — what does he mean when he says this that Christians

have been raised with Christ?? He is referring to the fact, that as Christians — we too have been made alive because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible clearly teaches that without Christ we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1 says: “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...*” before Christ **and** without Christ we were dead... spiritually dead. We were open to the wrath and judgement of God. Jesus himself said: “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*”

But now, for those in Christ... those who have trusted Christ as Savior — we are no longer dead — we have been made alive in Jesus Christ... we have been raised with Christ because of the power of the resurrection and the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. And it is because of this that we read in Romans: “*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*”

We have life... eternal life because we have been raised with Christ. And it is because of this that we are then to do what the Scripture says in our passage in Colossians: “*seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*”

Basically this is something that we are to be continually doing. The verb “*seek*” has the tense of meaning “*to be constantly seeking*” — in other words there needs to be a continuing effort to do what?? — “*to seek those things which are above... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*” To put it in the simplest of language — we are to seek the things of God — not the things on the earth.

This is not to mean that we are to not avail ourselves of the pleasures that the earth affords us — God has given us many good things to enjoy — beautiful weather... nature... good food... family and friends... art... entertainment — and other earthly pleasures. But what it does mean — that as Christians — **our main focus... our main emphasis** should not be on these things — but the things of God — as revealed in his word. In other words the things that are pleasing to God are to be things that we should be continually seeking after.

As Christians — we know that God has given us a great gift — he has given us our salvation through Jesus Christ — and in return for that gift — in thanksgiving for that gift — out of love for that gift that God has given us — we are then to do certain things. It is summarized for us here — we are “*to seek those things which are above...* In Ephesians 4 we are told to “*walk worthy of the calling we have received...*”

We think about the unbridled joy of Easter — the joy and blessing of the resurrection — the rejoicing that Jesus is alive — he rose from the dead and he is alive today — but we must never forget that he **had to die** first in order to be raised from the dead.

And that is what we remember during Holy Week — we remembered the arrest... the trial... the beatings... the scourging... the excruciating pain and suffering that our Savior went through for us

and our salvation. We remembered the degradation and shame as he hung there naked on the cross bearing my sin, your sin and the sins of all who would believe in him — when he cried out: *“My God., My God, why have you forsaken me?”*

I use a verse sometimes as I dismiss you from the Lord’s table from Romans 5:8: *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Friends — it does not get any more personal than this — if we know Christ as Savior it is because he died in our place. He died for you... he died for me on the cross at calvary — if we believe that he did.

And so for this reason — in gratitude and thanksgiving for what he has done — that we are *“to seek those things which are above...”*

What then are the things that we are to seek? We could point to the great commandment that you are familiar with — where Jesus said: *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

We can point to the 10 Commandments which is an expansion of the great commandment — something that we start each service with. The Great Commandment and the 10 commandments summarizing all of our situations in life — our relationship to God and our relationship to our fellow man. The first part of the Great Commandment *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”* and expanded in the 1st 4 of the 10 commandments describe our relationship to God — telling us that we must worship and serve Him only — because he is the only God. And we know as we compare scripture with scripture that we can only worship God through the Lord Jesus Christ — there is no other way.

And we know the 2nd part of the Great Commandment — *You shall love your neighbor as yourself* — expanded in the last 6 of the 10 Commandments describe our relationship to our fellow man — things that we should do and not do. And we can honestly say that there isn’t a situation in our lives that we come across that cannot fit into these commandments.

The point of it all is that as Christians — as those for whom Christ gave his life — we cannot just do what we want to do — or what we used to do. God has revealed himself to us in His Word — He has told us what He desires... what He likes... what is an abomination to him.

Look at what we read in 3:3: *“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”* What this means is that for those in Christ — the old person died — that is, the person without Christ — and the new person has been raised with Christ — that is, we are united with Christ because of his resurrection and ours.

And as a result of this — of being united with Christ — we are then *“to seek those things which are above...”* And we do this — not because God has this long list of does and don’ts that He wants us to follow... not because He wants to take away our fun... but because He loves us and wants the best for us.

God's way is the best — and He has shown us the way that we should go in his Word, the Bible. As I have said before, God loves us so much, that he accepts us as we are — but he loves us too much to leave us that way. He wants us to *“to seek those things which are above... out of thanksgiving for what he has done for us in and through Jesus Christ.*

Is it easy?? The obvious answer is no!! The temptations of the world are all around us... the way of the world is all around us. Think about the weekly television schedule — and the things that are portrayed as normal on many of the shows — things that are an offense to God — and what He has revealed in his word. Many would like us to think that this is the way it is or should be.

Think of a world where that which has always been considered perversion is now **not only** considered acceptable — but those who are against it are considered the perverted ones — I don't need to go into detail.

But God says — *“to seek those things which are above... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* And if this is what He wants us to do — then there must be a way to do it — and there is, through the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in each and every person who has accepted Christ as Savior. As I read from Romans: *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*

The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, is the same Spirit that lives in us. And if the Spirit has the power to raise Christ from the dead — then it certainly has the power to help us *“to seek those things which are above... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*

So as we think about the events of this day, let us remember that the resurrection is not just some foundational theological truth — which it is — but in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead there is the power for us *“to seek those things which are above... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*

May we always strive to seek the things of God — in thanksgiving for all that He has done for us through the Lord Jesus Christ – not only this day – Resurrection Day, but every day of our lives.